University of Alberta

Knowledge and Responsibility in Troilus and Criseyde

by

Lisa Ward

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 1996

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-18188-X

Canada

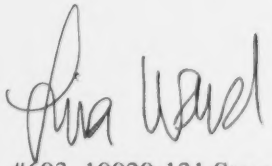
University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author:	Lisa Ward
Title of Thesis:	Knowledge and Responsibility in Troilus and Criseyde
Degree:	Master of Arts
Year this Degree Granted:	1996

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell copies for private, scholarly, or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.



#603, 10020-121 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T2N 1K3

August 28, 1996

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Knowledge and Responsibility in Troilus and Criseyde" submitted by Lisa Ward in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Prof. S. R. Reimer

Prof. G D. Burger

Prof. E. D. Blodgett

Knowledge and Responsibility in Troilus and Criseyde

Abstract

This thesis is a study of Troilus and Criseyde especially in relation to the themes of divine and social determinism which both Criseyde and Troilus contemplate when circumstances begin to turn against them. It is evident in their contemplation that neither Troilus nor Criseyde appear to grasp fully the significance of and the reasons for their tragedy. Crucial to this misunderstanding is their apparent inability to perceive and interpret the signs that they encounter, including language, prophesies, dreams and old stories. The main characters consistently misread, ignore, forget or respond inappropriately to these signs. From the opening scene of the story, when Calchas uses his prophetic knowledge to save his life rather than his city, the story links knowledge with moral responsibility, yet each of the main characters proves to be most ingenious in finding excuses for their own actions. Ultimately, while Chaucer acknowledges that there are impediments to interpretation, he also holds that his characters and readers should attempt to counteract these impediments by developing interpretive self-awareness and responsible hermeneutic habits.

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 1
Chapter 1: Reading Words	Page 10
Chapter 2: Reading Authority	Page 58
Chapter 3: Reading Divine Direction	Page 89
Conclusion	Page 108
Works Cited	Page 112

Introduction

When Chauncey Wood makes the declaration that "There are three basic ways in which one can interpret Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde," he subsumes a long history of intense and engaging critical debate to his systematics (The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus ix). It is no accident that this poem inspires critical discussion, for Chaucer deliberately complicates his love story; he poses questions and presents dilemmas with which he intends the reader to struggle. Chaucer encourages the reader to ponder the poem's meaning, judge his characters and become involved with their moral dilemmas. Thus, both the readers and characters of Troilus and Criseyde are constantly engaged in a cycle of reading, interpreting and judging. In his effort to explore issues of meaning and interpretation, Chaucer surrounds his characters and readers with signs and symbols. This thesis will investigate the hermeneutics of Troilus and Criseyde; it will include an assessment of the poem's signs and an evaluation of how the major characters–Troilus, Criseyde, Pandarus and the narrator–interpret these signs.

This study focuses, in part, on the moral issues that Chaucer addresses through signs and symbols in Troilus and Criseyde and takes the position that, although Chaucer certainly does more than discuss moral issues in the poem, these issues represent one complex and essential part of Chaucer's poetic meaning. This thesis asserts that Chaucer's biblically-oriented hermeneutic model is worthy of study not only because it represents the perspective that many of Chaucer's readers undoubtedly shared (making it a dominant discourse in Chaucer's era), but also because it is one characterizing element of Chaucer's poetry that, when examined, can strengthen the reader's understanding of the many complex dimensions of Chaucer's poetry (as well as all medieval thinking and writing). Through studies such as this one, readers who, for instance, attribute Chaucer's adherence to Christian "truths" to his role as "hapless 'scribe' or reproducer of ideology"

can acquire a better understanding of that ideology and its participating discourses and, perhaps, recognize that Chaucer's morality is more complex than this characterization allows for (Strohm xii).[1] This thesis will not focus only on the moral issues in Troilus and Criseyde, however, but, more specifically, will address Chaucer's ethics of reading and writing. As will be discussed below, as well as in subsequent chapters, Chaucer is concerned that both his audience and his characters attempt to overcome the impediments to interpretation by pursuing vigorously both interpretive self-awareness and responsible hermeneutic habits. Ultimately, although he acknowledges the difficulty of "seeing and saying the truth" (Ferster 3), Chaucer holds that "writers are responsible for not leading readers astray, [and] readers are responsible for not being led" (8). In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer emphasizes the importance of responsible interpretation by surrounding his characters with numerous signs and symbols which they must interpret.

There are many different kinds of signs and symbols in Troilus and Criseyde, including language, dreams, prophesies; even the pagan gods can be seen as symbolic figures. Much is revealed about the characters by studying how they interpret signs. Often, the characters's moral failings can be determined by evaluating their hermeneutic habits. Chaucer clearly considers interpretation a moral responsibility; if an individual misperceives semiotic significance, his/her faith may be misplaced and his/her convictions ill-founded. An individual's misinterpretation could thus cause him/her to make morally unsound decisions. Chaucer's sense of the importance of interpretation is illustrated when the narrator of The House of Fame vehemently curses anyone who would deliberately "mysdeme" his poem (I. 97). Chaucer's role as a poet[2] makes him

---

[1]It is important to note, as do both Peggy Knapp and Paul Strohm, that Chaucer often depicts not only the dominant Christian ideology, but "the simultaneous pressure of dominant and counter-hegemonic currents" in his poetry (Knapp 3). Both Knapp and Strohm focus on The Canterbury Tales, however, which lends itself to this critical perspective.

[2] The terms "poet" and "literature" must, of course, be used carefully when speaking of Chaucer and his writing, for they do not acknowledge the differences between the various kinds of authors and texts present in medieval England. "Poet," for instance, does not account for the differences between medieval rhetors

particularly sensitive to issues of interpretation and communication. He recognizes that communication is certainly difficult, but holds that it is not impossible, especially if the individuals involved do their best to understand each other honestly. The narrator of The House of Fame prays for the welfare of such responsible readers:

> And shelde hem fro poverte and shonde,
> And from unhap and ech disese,
> And sende hem al that may hem plese,
> That take hit wel and skorne hyt noght,
> Ne hyt mysdemen in her thoght
> Thorgh malicious entencion. (I. 88 - 93)

Ultimately, Chaucer's exploration of his characters's interpretive mistakes illustrates his theme that interpretation should be taken seriously and approached with what Judith Ferster calls "good will."

Many critics have recognized the important role that semiotic and hermeneutic issues play in Chaucer's works. In her book Chaucer on Interpretation, Judith Ferster explores Chaucer's attitude toward interpretation by his characters, his audience and himself. In one chapter of his book Mervelous Signals, Eugene Vance gives a thorough examination of the signification of language in Troilus and Criseyde and how it is a "living expression of the social order" (256). Chauncey Wood and J.D. North both explore Chaucer's incorporation of astrological imagery in his poems while John McCall is interested in Chaucer's mythical allusions. Other critics such as John Fleming and A. J. Minnis discuss

---

and poets, writers of Latin and vernacular texts, or writers of French and English texts. Similarly, "literature" does not differentiate between the various kinds of texts (from clerical texts to courtly poetry) produced in medieval England. Thus, the terms "poet" and "literature" will be used advisedly throughout this study, with the understanding that the contemporary connotations of these words are not entirely applicable to Chaucer's authorship and writings. The terms "reader" and "audience" must be similarly complicated. In this study, these terms are often used to refer to all possible readers. It must be noted that many parts of the hermeneutic discussion to follow do not rely on the consistent identity of the reader. This study asserts that the relationship between Chaucer's text and the reader, while greatly affected by that reader's social and gendered identity, can consistently be characterized by Chaucer's emphasis on the importance of reader responsibility, regardless of that reader's identity. "Reader" can thus refer to a wide range of readers, including an aristocratic patron, or the unimaginable future audience. Some of the difficulties surrounding the "subject" will be addressed in the first chapter of this study.

how Chaucer imitates classical sources. Hermeneutic studies also often focus on the characters of Troilus and Criseyde and how they interpret signs. For instance, critics have studied how the narrator's personal involvement colors his representation of the events of the story, and they have wondered to what extent his anxiety about the poetic process reflects Chaucer's own anxiety about poetic interpretation. All of the above issues are addressed in this thesis, for they all have either semiotic or hermeneutic ramifications; a discussion of these issues sheds light both on the significance of the signs in the poem and on why the characters interpret signs as they do. For instance, one of Chaucer's literary allusions, to the Thebaid, reveals the significance of Troilus's symbolic dream of the boar. Literary allusion also informs Chaucer's discussion of the difficulties of poetic interpretation; because Chaucer is in the position of reader when he alludes to other poetic works, he gains another perspective on the impediments to communication. Like the reader of Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer must attempt to discern another poet's meaning despite the fact that he comes from a later time and has had different experiences. Interpretation is a major issue in this poem; as interpreters, the characters, the poet and the reader of Troilus and Criseyde must all struggle with the complex issues surrounding interpretation, for Chaucer holds them all morally responsible for attempting to communicate and interpret signs to the best of their abilities.

Moral responsibility is not a new issue for critical studies of Troilus and Criseyde. Well-known and respected critics such as D.W. Robertson, Jr. and E. Talbot Donaldson have argued about the extent to which Chaucer criticizes the poem's major characters on moral grounds. Some critics argue that Chaucer finds his pagan characters, and their earthly love, worthy and admirable. Dodd, for instance, sees the poem entirely in terms of the beneficial powers of courtly love. He claims that Troilus and Criseyde resembles troubadour love-poetry in which love is often represented as "the cause and origin of all good" (129). In the Troilus, he says, "The ennobling nature of love finds many

expressions" (130). Other critics emphasize Chaucer's Christianity and argue that Chaucer condemns his characters's pagan sensibilities. Donald W. Rowe even claims that "Chaucer created Troilus and Criseyde to be a sacramental revelation of God" (172). However, most critics recognize that Chaucer emphasizes the complexity of the moral issues he discusses and, thus, takes neither of these extreme positions. C. David Benson is one critic who takes a more balanced approach to the poem's Christianity:

> Whereas the Christian material in Troilus is dismissed as irrelevant and merely conventional by some critics, others believe it expresses the clear meaning of the poem. Both positions simplify what Chaucer has done. To ignore the Christianity of Troilus is to diminish the whole, for it is a significant, if often submerged and never unalloyed, part of the poem's texture; yet at the same time, that Christian element is multiple and therefore provides no simple key to meaning. (179)

Fleming also attempts a more complex justification of the pagan and Christian elements of the poem. He describes Troilus and Criseyde as a "book so apparently pagan in its assumptions and procedures that several distinguished scholars have denied that its author could possibly have been a Christian," and yet asserts that,

> before I can be persuaded by those critics who find it inappropriate to apply Christian "answers" to the moral issues raised by Chaucer's text, I must know why the author went to such unlikely lengths to make his text ask distinctively Christian questions. (91)

Indeed, as will be discussed in this thesis, Chaucer's questions reveal much of the poem's meaning. Like Plato's ironic narrator, Socrates, Chaucer's questions often point to their own answers; both Chaucer and Socrates feign ignorance to encourage their audience to discover answers for themselves. Chaucer guides the reader's understanding through the narrator, whose reluctance to see the "truth" about the characters reveals the "truth" to the reader. Donaldson recognizes the narrator's role in communicating what he calls the ultimate moral of Troilus and Criseyde. He says that, until the end of the poem, the narrator avoids the moral "that human love, and by a sorry corollary everything human, is unstable and illusory" (92). Donaldson's word "sorry" accurately describes how the

narrator, and Chaucer, conceives of the characters's shortcomings. It is unfortunate that great human love affairs, like Troilus and Criseyde's, cannot last. It is also unfortunate that such great characters are blinded and ultimately destroyed by their love. It is clear that while Chaucer appreciates and, in some ways, admires his characters, he does criticize them for their inability to interpret signs "correctly"[3] and without bias. This is not to say that Chaucer's criticism of his characters is straightforward or uncomplicated. Rather, Chaucer emphasizes the complexity of the moral dilemma facing Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus. The characters in the poem are presented with numerous pieces of information which they must interpret and consider. They must evaluate historical events, the gods's notoriously ambiguous signs, social circumstances and the personal characteristics and histories of the people around them. However, even though the ethical situation of the characters is terribly complicated, the Christian principles of free will and personal responsibility are still affirmed in this poem against all temptation to fatalism and determinism. Thus, while readers sympathize with Criseyde, for example, they also recognize her judgment as flawed and her resolution of the conflict as ethically wrong.

If Chaucer's criticism of his characters for their hermeneutic failings is essentially a moral criticism, one must ask: does Chaucer expect his pagan characters to come to Christian realizations? It is interesting to note that Chaucer puts some medieval Christian philosophy, including Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, at the disposal of his characters. Fleming studies one of Troilus's Boethian speeches and wonders to what extent Chaucer expects Troilus to understand Boethius's message:

> Yet is it reasonable to expect Troilus, pagan Troilus, to get the point? The explicit answer given to this question by several distinguished Chaucerians is "No." It is an answer that cautions but does not convince me. (203)

---

[3] The phrase "correct" interpretation does not refer to an interpretive process that results in the subject's understanding of an ultimate Truth. Rather, it refers to a process that results in the characters's or readers's perception, to some extent, of the "meaning" they encounter in Chaucer's poetry. Some of the difficulties surrounding author meaning and intention will be addressed in the first chapter.

Fleming concludes that the only way to excuse Troilus from responsibility for understanding his Boethian material is to excuse him from rationality. Deconstruction theorists like Jacques Derrida would argue with Fleming's conclusion that rationality should preserve Troilus's ability to translate Boethian materials. In "Des Tours de Babel," for instance, Derrida questions the possibility of transparent, unidirectional translation. Despite Derrida's contention, however, Troilus is not exempted from responsibility for understanding Boethius in the context of the poem. Chaucer puts his characters in situations in which they must struggle with Christian issues because he expects them to deliberate the significance of these problems sincerely–and because he believes them capable of understanding these problems and making moral decisions as a result. It is also important to remember that The Consolation of Philosophy represents how far rationality can go towards the same conclusions that Christianity affirms through revelation and faith. Thus, Chaucer suggests that, even without Biblical input, a "right-thinking" pagan ought to be able to reach the same conclusions as are found in Boethius. Consequently, even though Chaucer does not indicate that his pagans should know of specifically Christian events like incarnations and resurrections, he does suggest that a "consistent" thinking through of their own Platonism would have led them, like Boethius, to reject fatalism. This is not to say that they would have been identical to a medieval Christian in their thinking, but that they would have been one step closer to "truth" as defined by medieval Christianity. Because his characters do not come to Boethius's conclusion, Chaucer makes it clear that they have failed to live by the "truth" that they know. Thus, to some extent, Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus are expected to perceive Christian truths. Since they have access to Boethius, they should be able to learn from him that earthly love is not divine love; earthly love is transitory and thus cannot be a source of perfect happiness.

Chaucer depicts Troilus's, Criseyde's and Pandarus's misinterpretations not only for their own sake, but also for the benefit of his medieval Christian reader. Chaucer knows that his medieval readers are capable of some realizations that his characters are not. Thus, even if the characters of Troilus and Criseyde cannot recognize their mistakes, the reader can. Chaucer gives the reader the opportunity to compare his/her own "correct" interpretation with the characters's often willful and biased, "incorrect" interpretation. He also shows the reader how misinterpretation can have tragic results.

One of the greatest tragedies of Troilus and Criseyde is that the major characters give up so many occasions to learn about themselves and their situation. These characters encounter numerous signs in the course of the poem and fail to acknowledge or "correctly" interpret many of them. By studying the instances in which these characters encounter signs and go through the process of interpretation, the characters's interpretive habits will be revealed. These characters often use signs to justify their actions, they often ignore signs, and they often misread signs to their supposed advantage. There are also a few occasions when the characters acknowledge a sign's uncomfortable signification. This evaluation of the semiotics of Troilus and Criseyde will open with a discussion of language, for language is the fundamental system of signs in the poem. The characters's use of language will also be discussed, including their hermeneutic "bad habits." Along with this discussion of linguistic signs, some of the problems inherent in communication will also be evaluated. Chaucer introduces two of these problems in the poem: the temporal instability of language and the dependence of understanding on individual experience. These problems caused Chaucer concern about his ability to communicate with the audience, as did readers's increasingly independent access to literary works during his lifetime. More pressure was put on Chaucer by medieval literary theorists, who emphasized the power of language and how it could represent the transcendent God. Chaucer, like these theorists, displays a strong sense of the moral significance of literary

works. In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer responds to this poetic pressure by emphasizing the importance of having a productive attitude toward communication.

The second chapter will include a discussion of the pagan gods as symbolic figures. In order to understand the pagan gods, the characters of Troilus and Criseyde must decipher the gods's meaning–they must go through a challenging process of interpretation. In Calchas and Cassandra, Chaucer provides his characters with examples of "correct" interpretation of divine messages. However, Calchas's behavior also demonstrates that knowledge is not ethically neutral; in Chaucer's Christian universe, individuals are held responsible for what they do with knowledge. Unfortunately, Troilus's, Criseyde's, Pandarus's and the narrator's assessments of the gods are not as accurate as are the assessments of the prophets because the major characters allow their interpretations to be colored by their will. The second chapter will also include a discussion of old stories which, like the gods, provide the characters with authoritative information that can help them assess their circumstances.

Finally, the third chapter will include an evaluation of some of the most recognizable symbols in the poem: meteorological phenomena, astrological phenomena, and dreams. Like the less prominent symbols in the poem, these symbols provide opportunities for the characters to gain knowledge about their situation. The characters of Troilus and Criseyde encounter many problems when interpreting these symbols. These characters have many "bad habits," including a tendency toward willful interpretation. They also often assume attitudes that can hinder their ability to communicate. Chaucer shows the reader that although such attitudes and bad hermeneutic habits may make one's present circumstances easier to bear, they can be ultimately destructive on a large scale.

Chapter 1: Reading Words

An appropriate way to introduce a study of the symbols in Troilus and Criseyde is to study the poem's linguistic signs. One important difference between a symbol and a sign, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, is that a symbol is "never wholly arbitrary; it is not empty, for there is the rudiment of a natural bond between the signifier and the signified" (68). De Saussure argues that a sign is arbitrary; there is no significant connection between the signifier and the signified. Charles Peirce has a slightly different perspective on signs; he argues that a sign is connected to its signifier–by the thought that inspires an individual to use the sign. In Troilus and Criseyde, language is both the most widespread system of signs in the poem, and the "principal sphere of action of the story's characters" (Vance 270). Most of what occurs between the characters in the poem occurs in and through words; even the action of the poem is mediated to the reader through verbal accounts. Thus, because of its prominence in the action, characterization and plot of the poem, language is an appropriate place to start this semiological study. When one considers the theories of de Saussure, however, there is another reason for beginning a semiotic study with an analysis of language. De Saussure says that because language is made up of "wholly arbitrary" signs, it is "the most characteristic [system of expression]" (68). This initial study of the "most characteristic" system of signs in the poem will reveal a pattern in the way the characters in the poem, including the narrator, misunderstand or irresponsibly interpret the signs that they encounter. The study will also uncover some of the reasons for the characters's misinterpretation, including willful misreading and the difficulties inherent in all communication. These issues, among others, drive Chaucer's concern for how his poetry influences the reader.[1] Before closely analyzing the issues that

---

[1] Having made this assertion about Chaucer's poetic intention, it is necessary to acknowledge the postmodern rejection of the significance of the author for literary criticism. Postmodern theorists such as Michel Foucault have argued against emphasizing the author when evaluating a text. In his article, "What is an Author?", Foucault argues that not only is a text not the product of the workings of one intellect

contribute to his poetic anxiety, however, we must consider Chaucer's views on the issue of poetic communication that appear throughout his poetry, including his conviction that successful communication depends on the concentrated effort and positive attitude not only of the author, but of the reader as well.

Chaucer's poetic responsibilities clearly interest him, for in much of his poetry he examines issues that involve his role as a poet. Such issues include the nature of poetry, the responsibilities of the poet, the "textual surface of the fiction and . . . the play of language" (Ridley 16), as well as the difficulties of successful communication. In The House of Fame, for instance, Chaucer discusses the implications of being a poet beginning with the necessity of having "tydynges" (II. 644). The narrator of The House of Fame goes on to claim that the author does not bear sole responsibility for the successful communication of the poem. As has been previously mentioned, the narrator asserts that the reader is also responsible for the part he/she plays in reading the poem and cautions the reader against misinterpreting the poem:

> And whoso thorgh presumpcion,
> Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,
> Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,

(Foucault might argue that Dante, Boccaccio and Boethius can also be said to have authored Troilus and Criseyde), but that

> the task of criticism is not to reestablish the ties between an author and his work or to reconstitute an author's thought and experience through his works. . . [Rather,] criticism should concern itself with the structures of a work, its architectonic forms, which are studied for their intrinsic and internal relationships. (118)

Robert Sturges discusses medieval literary texts to make similar arguments about the medieval author's lack of autonomous control over his text. Sturges uses Derrida's notion of the "free play of writing" to characterize the production of and the medieval reader's/author's attitude toward medieval literary works. This study takes a position contrary to Foucault's and Sturges's theories in assuming the relevence of Chaucer's authorship and asserting that Chaucer's intention can be located, to some extent, in his poetry. Foucault's criticism of the author-based approach is helpful, however, in warning against a too-confident assertion of author intention or of how author intention defines "meaning" in the text; his assertion that a text's "meaning" is partially determined by the discourse in which a text participates is also worthwhile. Certainly, determining author intention is inherently problematic and uncertain. Similarly, Sturges is correct to differentiate between contemporary editing practices and those common in the Middle Ages. As he points out, medieval readers and authors "participated in a very different set of literary relationships" (109).

> Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God
> That (dreme he barefot, dreme he shod),
> That every harm that any man
> Hath had syth the world began
> Befalle hym therof or he sterve (94 - 101)

Beyond the humor of this passage there lies a serious warning to those who would willfully misinterpret information–including poetry. As a poet, Chaucer's goal is to communicate with his audience. Despite the simplicity of this statement, "communication" does not express a static relationship between Chaucer and his reader. Chaucer communicates in many ways and for many reasons. Chaucer's communicative goals are diverse; they include, among others, expressing an ideological "truth," and exploring the role of subjective desire. A reader who purposefully misunderstands poetry (or who makes no sincere effort to educe the poet's meaning) frustrates Chaucer from realizing his communicative goals. Chaucer is aware of how much control a reader has over a text because he is a reader himself; he reads Boethius and Boccaccio in Troilus and Criseyde. Because the reader has control over the text, Chaucer holds him or her partially accountable for the successful communication of his poetry. The reader is thus obligated to approach the text with what Judith Ferster calls "good will."

In her book, Chaucer on Interpretation, Judith Ferster argues that Chaucer requires the reader to "treat the other (other people, texts, Chaucer himself) with good will–as if they existed–without the assurance that they are anything other than the fictions of our imagination" (92). Ferster admits that complete sympathy with the other is difficult, but argues that, for Chaucer, it is necessary since the reader is accountable for influencing the text (or author, or person) that he/she is interacting with:

> . . . even if [the other] exist[s] independently, they may be partly of our own making because they change in response to us, are new in relation to us. Whether or not they exist independently, we will not learn their intentions in a way that is unmediated by our own wishes and our own

> effects on them. But we must try. Chaucer's ethics of reading are a response to the unavoidable dangers of interpretation. (92-93)

As will be discussed later in this chapter, Chaucer responds to the "dangers of interpretation" by using several narratorial techniques to inform readers of their influence over the text so that they will strive for "correct" and sympathetic interpretation. Having discussed Chaucer's concern over his influence on readers, and his resulting instructions to those readers, it is now fitting to study the issues that contribute to his anxiety. Four of these issues will be addressed in this chapter, including the medieval theories of verbal signs, the growing access that individuals had to literary works, the many problems inherent in poetic communication, and, as will now be discussed, the great potential power of literary works.

Chaucer is aware of the profound influence that literary works can have over their audiences. He expresses this conviction most clearly in the Retraction of The Canterbury Tales when he begs the reader to believe that he wrote with good will despite the fact that some of his works may appear to encourage sinful behavior. An example of the power of literary influence is given in Book II of Troilus and Criseyde. The narrator tells the reader that Antigone's song strongly affects Criseyde;

> . . . every word which that she of hire herde,
> She gan to prenten in hire herte faste,
> And ay gan love hire lasse for t'agaste
> Than it dide erst, and synken in hire herte,
> That she wex somwhat able to converte. (II. 899 - 903)

Criseyde is tangibly influenced by this song. Upon hearing it, she "is more willing to become the kind of lover the song describes" (Ferster 10). Judith Ferster remarks that such descriptions of the power of stories were common in the Middle Ages:

> The Middle Ages is full of stories about people telling stories as examples to imitate. Sometimes the results are beneficial, as when St. Augustine's conversion is mediated by the story of St. Antony. . . . Sometimes the mediation by stories is destructive. Dante's Paolo and Francesca lose their

> souls by imitating the adulterous passion of Lancelot and Guenevere. Francesca blames the book and its author for her damnation. (8-9)

Ferster claims that one result of this perception of the power of stories was that pressure was put on medieval poets "to produce good results in their audiences" (9). Although it must be acknowledged that Chaucer's poems can be seen as, on one level, fables, that lack a unmistakable kernel of transcendent truth, they can also be seen as largely moral works in which Chaucer explores ethical and religious questions. When this latter perspective is taken, it is apparent that the pressure on medieval poets "to produce good results" augmented Chaucer's concern for the effect of his poetry and influenced his decision to apologize for his "enditynges of worldly vanitees," including Troilus and Criseyde, in the Retraction (1083-84). Chaucer's Christian Retraction links him to other medieval thinkers who also express concern, in Christian terms, for how literary works affect readers. Many of Chaucer's opinions about language and poetic communication resemble the views held by medieval philosophers who considered language and sign systems; these philosophers also emphasized the power and philosophical ramifications of language.

Chaucer's concern about the influence of his poetry was possibly influenced by the medieval theories of verbal signs developed by thinkers including St. Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas and Dante. In her book The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge, Marcia Colish describes medieval sign theories about language which she says were based in part on the belief that "sensory data, in this case words perceived aurally, could conduce the subject to an accurate knowledge of prior and non-sensible realities" (viii). She goes on to say that Christianity was an "important source of the medieval theory of verbal signs. Medieval epistemologists dealt primarily with religious knowledge" (ix). Colish argues that although the inclusion of religion in their theory of verbal signs complicated the issue for medieval thinkers, Christianity also

> supplied [such thinkers] with a number of doctrines that strongly supported the plausibility of a verbal theory of knowledge. The Aristotelian certainty that sensory data led to a knowledge of prior and non-sensible realities was paralleled by the scriptural assertions that God can be known through His creation, which He is believed to resemble. (ix)

This is not to say, Colish argues, that verbal signs were thought to be able to communicate knowledge of God perfectly, for "Signs, they held, would always be limited in their cognitive function, both to the degree to which they could represent the transcendent God at all and in the degree to which they could convey the knowledge of God to the subject in the first instance" (ix). Colish also remarks that the doctrine of the Incarnation provided medieval thinkers with a "strong motive for a sign theory conceived in expressly verbal terms" (ix). She states that medieval theorists believed that Christ, through the Incarnation, had cleansed the human mind of sin and made it capable of coming "to a knowledge of God in Christ; and the human faculty of speech could now participate in the Incarnation by helping to spread the Word to the world" (x). This theory certainly laid much responsibility on the pens of the thinkers who subscribed to it. As Colish says,

> The New Covenant of Christ, in which all major medieval thinkers believed themselves to participate, carried professional responsibilities as well as rewards. This was a condition duly recognized by the medieval commentators on the subject, most of whom had been ordained to preach and to teach the Word of God. They had been called, they believed, not only to attain a knowledge of God themselves, but also to convey the knowledge of God to the world. . . . The acutely paradoxical implications of their mission did not fail to inspire in them mingled feelings of enthusiasm and unworthiness. God had commanded them to express the Inexpressible, in terms accessible to the speaker and the audience alike. (3)

While Chaucer's poetry is certainly not as expressly religious in nature as are some of the writings of these thinkers,[2] he may well have felt a similar anxiety about the difficulties inherent in, and yet the importance of, successful communication. Indeed, even if

---

[2]Also, these writers were not, of course, the only influences on Chaucer. Other influences, such as less religious writers and his poetic form, may have affected Chaucer in contrary ways.

Chaucer did not directly identify with these theorists, he may still have been influenced by their belief in the increased moral significance of language. Phillip Pulsiano describes how Chaucer's poetry appears to mirror the linguistic concerns of these theorists: "Although Chaucer nowhere directly addresses the leading language theorists of his day, his poetry reflects an intense awareness of the moral and philosophical dimensions of language, an awareness which gave shape to his own developing poetics" (153). A passage in Troilus and Criseyde which appears to reflect the ideas of these Christian sign theorists is the poem's conclusion, for in the final lines of the poem Chaucer uses language to express a vision of divinity. This fact, however, has led many critics merely to disregard this part of the poem.

Some critics claim that Chaucer's anxiety about his audience's spiritual well-being led him to contradict the pagan content of Troilus and Criseyde in the final lines of this poem.[3] C. David Benson characterizes this cynical view of the Christian conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde, saying that "Some critics discount these Christian additions as largely irrelevant or superficial" (Chaucer's Troilus 185). Such an opinion is only possible, however, if Chaucer is believed to be writing an exclusively pagan poem in the first four books. In fact, this study will reveal that Chaucer uses several techniques to encourage the reader to have a critical attitude toward the pagan world of Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer uses the same techniques to tackle the issue of the readers's increased role in the interpretive process by, as previously mentioned, making the readers aware of the influence they have over the text so that they will strive for "correct" and sympathetic interpretation. To continue the discussion of the issues that contributed to Chaucer's anxiety over poetic influence, however, this study will now address one reason for the

---

[3]The final lines of the poem are also dismissed by critics who assume that Chaucer included these lines merely to satisfy the medieval aristocracy who commonly authorized this Christian ideology.

reader's increased role in poetic interpretation: literary works were more available to individuals during Chaucer's time than in previous ages.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the public gained an increased private access to literary works and thus had the opportunity to interpret these works independent of instruction. Judith Ferster notes that, with greater literacy and easier access to books in the Middle Ages, "more and more people could experience freedom with literary works. The nominalist emphasis on God's freedom produced a congruent emphasis on the individual's moral responsibility" (9-10). The narrator of Troilus and Criseyde gives an extreme illustration of the importance of the reader's role in independent poetic interpretation when he offers the audience an opportunity to rewrite the poem if they know more about love than does he:

> For myn wordes, heere and every part,
> I speke hem alle under correccioun
> Of yow that felyng han in loves art,
> And putte it al in youre discrecioun
> To encresse or maken dymynucioun
> Of my langage, and that I yow biseche. (III. 1331-36)

The narrator's statement can be read as both the poet's flattering appeal to his social superiors and as a humorous exaggeration of the reader's interpretive role. On one level, this passage is certainly meant humorously, for if the narrator's advice were taken seriously, it might cause an audience member to misperceive the meaning of the poem– which this study has already asserted appears to be one of Chaucer's concerns. In his discussion of the vulnerability of medieval literary works to scribal, authorial, or reader alteration, Robert Sturges suggests that this kind of appeal, while certainly "conventional" and "rhetorical," may be "rooted in what was actually possible" (121) since the medieval reading experience was distinctly more "participatory" than the contemporary reading experience (122). Judith Ferster once again correlates Chaucer's emphasis on the reader's part in interpretation of the text with his concern for how his poetry affects the reader:

"Chaucer's emphasis on the reader's rewriting of texts may have been motivated by an anxiety about his influence on his audience's spiritual health. To minimize his own responsibility, he emphasizes the audience's responsibility for its use of stories" (11). Chaucer certainly demonstrates his awareness of the potentially serious consequences of willful misreadings in Troilus and Criseyde; he gives many examples of this kind of misinterpretation in the poem. As will be discussed, the characters in this poem misread texts, dreams, and prophesies because they allow their will to take precedence over "correct" interpretation. The hermeneutic partnership between the poet and the audience is certainly a delicate one; just as medieval poets are obligated to influence their audiences positively, those audiences are obligated to interpret the literature responsibly– since their spiritual welfare is at stake. Unfortunately, deliberate misreading is not the only obstacle to successful interpretation. Two of the principal obstacles to successful communication that Chaucer addresses in Troilus and Criseyde are the instability of language and the relationship between interpretation and individual experience.

One of Chaucer's major poetic concerns in Troilus and Criseyde is the instability of language over time and space.

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. (II. 22 - 28)

Like the bricks in a great work of architecture, the words of a great poem may shift over time. Because such a shift causes words to change their signification, it can result in the poem's destruction if it no longer communicates its meaning. Many modern language theorists have had similar insights into the causes of linguistic instability. Michel Foucault's theory of the episteme expresses a similar understanding of the dependence of

a sign's signification on, among other things, time period or epoch. C. G. Prado gives a definition of Foucault's notion of epistemes and describes the magnitude of their significance: "Epistemes are holistic frameworks that define problematics and their potential resolutions and constitute views of the world comprising the most fundamental of identificatory and explanatory notions, such as the nature of causality in a given range of phenomena." (26). As Prado's definition suggests, the shift from one episteme to another involves radical conceptual changes. Ferdinand de Saussure also holds that time is "the cause of linguistic differentiation" (198). According to de Saussure, language is unstable because, as previously mentioned, it is a system of arbitrary signs. He says that language is unlike "other human institutions–customs, laws, etc.–[which] are all based in varying degrees on the natural relations of things; all have of necessity adapted the means employed to the ends pursued" (75). Language, however, he says, "is limited by nothing in the choice of means, for apparently nothing would prevent the associating of any idea whatsoever with just any sequence of sounds" (76). Thus, language can change as easily as stay the same; it is "radically powerless to defend itself against the forces which from one moment to the next are shifting the relationship between the signified and the signifier" (75). De Saussure qualifies his argument, however, by stating that time also "insures the continuity of language" because the language of one age is always the precursor of the language of the next age (74). Chaucer suggests a similar understanding of the inevitability of linguistic change–which is one reason for his concern for the fragility of poetic communication. Like the narrator of The House of Fame, one might well ask: "What may ever laste?" (1147).

The narrator of Troilus and Criseyde describes an even more profound impediment in the way of communication between a poet and his audience. He remarks that a lover might wonder at how "Troilus com to his lady grace," thinking that "So nold I nat love

purchace" (II. 32-33). The narrator says that he would not be surprised at such a response since interpretation is inevitably linked to individual experience:

> Ek scarsly ben ther in this place thre
> That have in love seid lik, and don, in al;
> For to thi purpos this may liken the,
> And the right nought; yet al is seid or schal;
> Ek som men grave in tree, some in ston wal,
> As it bitit . . . . (II. 43 - 48)

The narrator's job is made difficult because individual experience plays such a large role in the hermeneutic process. The narrator implies that even if he were an expert in the ways of love (which he protests he is not), there would always be a lover who would not share his perspective. Individual experience does not only affect agreement between individuals for Chaucer, however. Individuality of interpretation also interferes with mere communication between individuals. Peggy Knapp argues that linguistic meaning depends on individual experience because "Words signify, not things, but ideas and images of things in a potentially limitless series of deferrals backwards. Further, they derive authority from a social community and are therefore subject to change as it changes" (4). Thus, words are not "definite and binding" (4); linguistic communication, by definition, involves constant individual judgment. She goes on to note that

> No one experiences mainstream discourse . . . as an entire, seamless, or unchallenged outlook; each separate life history will reflect a number of discursive tendencies and experience the discontinuities between them in a pecular way. . . . The result is a certain unpredictability in the responses people offer to their social settings. (5)

Umberto Eco has a slightly different understanding of the process of shifting meanings that is interpretation. In his discussion of Charles Peirce's notion of "unlimited semiosis" Eco emphasizes that this notion

> does not lead to the conclusion that interpretation has no criteria. To say that interpretation (as the basic feature of semiosis) is potentially unlimited does not mean that interpretation has no object and that it "riverruns" for the mere sake of itself. (6)

Rather, he says, "the interpreted text imposes some constraints upon its interpreters. The limits of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text" (6-7). Eco's interest in the "rights of the text" certainly coincides with Chaucer's own interest in his readers's sensitivity to interpretation in Troilus and Criseyde.

It is interesting to note that Marxist critics have avoided the dilemma of subjectivity by considering subjects as mere embodiments of ideologies, which Marx defines as the "ideal expression of the dominant material relationships" (Williams 127). Marxist critics would thus claim that Troilus and Criseyde is not an expression of Chaucer's creative vision, but of the ideology predominant in his era. According to Paul Smith, deconstructionist Jacques Derrida also evades this dilemma by reducing subjectivity to "a mere passivity, a simple conductor of the hierarchy of semantic forces" (50). Through his notion of "differance," however, Derrida does acknowledge the separation of experience. Reception theorists have also addressed this impediment to communication, often using the word "indeterminacy" to describe the uncertainties of meaning in a text. Wolfgang Iser talks about "gaps" or "blanks of indeterminacy" which require the reader to construct, as summarized by Holub, a "regulative context . . . from textual clues or signals" in order to "establish intent" (Holub 92). According to Iser's theories, there is also no guarantee that the reader will successfully interpret the meaning in the text since the reader is "unable to test whether his/her understanding of the text is correct" (92). Similarly, and perhaps more importantly for Chaucer, the poet is unable to test whether the reader's understanding is "correct".[4] Judith Ferster argues that the issue of indeterminacy defines Chaucer's "dilemma" as an author: "He may have some effect on

---

[4] Michel Foucault argues that, on one level, experience is the source of "truth" for an individual; "truth" is therefore peculiar to each individual. For Foucault, the individuality of truth also can be seen on a societal level. According to his relativist notion of truth, each society has "types of discourse that it accepts . . . as true" as well as mechanisms which "enable one to distinguish true and false statements" (Prado 120). Ultimately, however, Foucault has grave doubts about the possibility for any "true" understanding since, he holds, there is no "meaning" to be understood.

his audience, but he cannot hope to control that effect. His book may intrude on reader's lives in ways that are very different from his intentions" (19). Chaucer addresses this problem by employing certain narratorial techniques that guide the audience's understanding and keep them aware of their obligation to interpret the poem "correctly."

The narrator responds to the challenges of communication by attempting to remove himself from the hermeneutic circle. He uses several techniques to protest his poetic innocence. One of the devices that the narrator uses to avoid responsibility is continually to appeal to his source, Lollius, as the true author of and ground of authority in the poem:

> Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame
> Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,
> Disblameth me if any word be lame,
> For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I.
> Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,
> No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;
> A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis. (II. 15-21)

He retreats from literary accountability by claiming that he is merely a translator who knows nothing of his subject matter (or the ways of love) and that the act of translation involves no interpretation. In addition to the fact that translation is obviously not as innocent an activity as the narrator would have the reader believe,[5] most critics agree that Lollius did not even exist. The critical consensus is that Chaucer used Boccaccio's Il Filostrato as the basis for his work while also borrowing material from other authors including Dante and Boethius. Presumably, some members of Chaucer's medieval audience would have been aware of his true source and would have appreciated the irony of the narrator's claim to faithful translation.

A further irony inherent in the narrator's protestations of ignorance and innocence is the fact that his interruptions themselves draw attention to his involvement with the poem.

---

[5] Translation has been a subject of interest for many contemporary philosophers. As previously mentioned, Jacques Derrida has explored the problems surrounding translation extensively in "Des Tours de Babel".

Florence Ridley claims that Chaucer uses the act of narratorial interruption to make the audience aware of the poet and his role in the creation of the poem. She argues that Chaucer's narrators "invite attention to his act of composition . . . [by] commenting on this practice of his art, on the nature of language, and on the dependence of his composition for survival upon his own language" (16). The reader thus becomes involved in the poetic process in more ways than being offered the opportunity to rewrite the poem. This technique is effective in an overt way, for it reminds the audience that reading necessarily involves interpretation. However, Chaucer also encourages the reader to read critically in another, more subtle way; the narrator's impossible assertions of uninvolvement with the poem caution the reader that the narrator is not as objective and disinterested in his subject matter as he claims. Such a reader becomes suspicious of the narrator's motives and will be inclined to consider the narrator and his poem with a more critical eye.

Not only does the narrator appeal to Lollius to deny responsibility for the poem, but he also claims general ignorance on many points without even attempting to indicate a more knowledgeable source. This study has already mentioned that the narrator denies any knowledge of love, and thus, he implies, he can bear no responsibility for the representation of love in the poem. The narrator makes similar excuses throughout the poem. Early on in the poem, for instance, the narrator states that he does not know whether Criseyde has children:

> But wheither that she children hadde or noon,
> I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon. (I. 132-3)

The narrator's dismissal does not cause the reader to lose interest in the question of whether Criseyde has children or not. In fact, the narrator's comment signals to the reader that Criseyde's possible lack of children is an important issue that could provide insight into her character. Readers familiar with Chaucer's source poem, Boccaccio's Il

Filostrato, will recognize the narrator's tactic even more readily, for in Boccaccio's poem, Criseyde is definitely childless. Even if the reader is not familiar with Boccaccio, he/she may suspect that the narrator is hiding something behind his assertions of ignorance. Such a reader may ask questions like "Does Criseyde have an inappropriate attitude towards marriage?" or "Is there something physically wrong with Criseyde?"

For Chaucer's medieval, and probably Christian, audience, Criseyde's childlessness through a serious relationship could signify a moral failing. The importance of procreation to the teachings of the medieval Roman Catholic Church is clearly reflected in Alan of Lille's Complaint of Nature, Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls and in The Romance of the Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. In the latter allegorical poem, the Garden of Mirth (representing courtly love) is contrasted with the Shepherd's Park (representing procreative love). According to the character of Genius, the fountain in the Garden of Mirth "intoxicates a living man / And brings him to his death" whereas the fountain in the Shephard's Park, where procreative love is the goal, has the power to revive the dead (437). The message in favor of procreative love is clear. This message is one that Chaucer and his medieval audience were familiar with.[6]

In Book II of Troilus and Criseyde, the narrator makes another excuse for Criseyde that affects the reader in a manner contrary to that which he intends. This narratorial miscalculation occurs when the narrator defends the speed at which Criseyde falls in love with Troilus:

> Now myghte som envious jangle thus:
> "This was a sodeyn love; how myght it be
> That she so lightly loved Troilus
> Right for the firste syghte, ye, parde?"
> Now whoso seith so, mote he nevere ythe!

---

[6] This is not to say that Chaucer approaches the issue of procreation as explicitly or unambiguously in Troilus and Criseyde.

> For every thing a gynyng hath it nede
> Er al be wrought, withowten any drede. (II.666-72)

The narrator's objection to those who would be critical of Criseyde is excessive. He is so protective of her that the reader becomes suspicious of his motives and of her innocence. E. Talbot Donaldson summarizes the effect that the narrator's condemnation has on the reader:

> . . . the unfortunate thing about [the narrator's] comment is that, while presumably suppressing the suspicions of a minority, he has implanted these very suspicions in the minds of all his readers. People who had never thought that there was any formal law governing the rate of speed at which a woman should fall in love may suddenly start believing there is one, and go looking in Andreas Capellanus to find out whether Criseide has exceeded the limit. . . . Nor is the narrator's comment quite satisfactory, for what his stanza is apt to leave in one's mind is not the sententiously fuzzy saying that everything has a beginning before it's done, but the strong statement that is being denied: "This was a sodein love." (66)

When the narrator so vigorously excuses morally inappropriate behaviour (or even possibly morally inappropriate behaviour) it becomes very difficult for the reader to ignore the behaviour that he defends. The reader's suspicion of the narrator is increased when he/she recalls that the narrator made no similar attempt to justify or explain the fact that Troilus fell in love quickly.

It is evident to the reader that, as Judith Ferster says when speaking of Troilus, the narrator regularly "imposes his will on [the] text" (11). The narrator's questions, hints, and excuses do not blind readers, but sensitize them to the moral failings of the characters (and of the narrator himself). The narrator thus unwittingly guides both the reader's attention and judgment. Ridley surely underestimates the extent to which Chaucer guides the reader's judgment through the narrator when she claims that there is the potential in the text for "an infinity" (21) of interpretations. While it appears that Chaucer leaves "the task of supplying coherence or significance to the reader," in fact, the narrator's questions and uncertainties have too consistent an effect on the reader to be entirely unintended or

undirected (20). Chaucer's narrator asks questions that lead the reader toward the answers. Even if the narrator does not intend the audience to be critical, Chaucer does. This is not to say that all readers of Troilus and Criseyde will invariably come to the same conclusions about the poem. Certainly, critics and readers have had many different understandings of the poem; however, the reason for the possibility of varied interpretation is not that Chaucer lacks any definite meaning (21). Rather, as the narrator suggests in the Proem to Book II, the possibility of multiple interpretation is caused by the inevitable shifting of the meaning of words over time and space (which affects modern audiences) and the numerous differences between the experiences and perspectives of individuals (which affect both Chaucer's medieval audiences and modern audiences). Such a shift in meaning can even affect one individual reader when he/she reads the same passage with a different focus or emphasis in order to deliberately explore the multiple possibilities in the poem. Although the poem's meaning is often diverse and complicated, Chaucer does not purposefully hinder poetic communication, for communication is his primary task. The characters in Troilus and Criseyde (including the narrator), however, often do interfere with communication between themselves. They misread, misrepresent themselves through language, and manipulate others using words.

How responsible are the characters of Troilus and Criseyde for using and interpreting language "correctly"? Indeed, as has already been mentioned, one of Chaucer's themes in this poem is the unavoidable uncertainty with which individuals must speak and attempt to understand language. However, Chaucer does not assert that communication is impossible, nor does he encourage the reader to trust the characters's use of language as being appropriate or even well-intentioned. Rather, the reader is expected to be aware of this ambiguity and acknowledge that while communication is problematic for the characters, it is possible. It is at least possible for the characters to approach communication with good will and attempt to discern the "true meaning" of words. The

reader is thus expected to judge the characters's attitudes toward interpretation and evaluate whether or not the characters consider clues such as context and intent in an effort to come as close to "correct" interpretation as possible. When the characters do not make a good attempt at understanding, and when they put their own desires above "correct" assessment, Chaucer encourages the reader to acknowledge the characters's shortcomings and be critical of their linguistic and hermeneutic failings. Fleming argues that one of the major reasons that Troilus so often fails to interpret "correctly" is his lack of self-knowledge:

> His real failure of understanding is his failure to respond to the Delphic imperative: "Know thyself." [At no time during] his mortal life does Troilus subject his obsessive passion to an ethical examination. Herein resides the truly tragic dimension of interpretive incapacity. (229)

There is evidence in the poem that the reader is intended to make similar judgments of Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus. For instance, there are two linguistic patterns in the poem which the reader can use to discern the characters's habitual mistakes when using and interpreting language.

In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer establishes certain word patterns to inform the reader's perspective of the poem. Two of these patterns are the characters's recurring use of Christian phrases and quotations and violent imagery to describe the experience of courtly love. The representation of Christianity in the poem is a difficult issue that is often disputed by critics. As previously mentioned, some critics argue that the poem's Christian conclusion results from the narrator's discomfort with the story, and that it is not an essential part of the poem. Undermining the opinion of these critics, however, is evidence that the narrator's Christian conclusion is merely the culmination of a series of Christian allusions that appear throughout the poem. One way in which the Christian content of the poem is manifested is through the characters's use of religious imagery and allusions to Biblical passages. The religious language in the poem serves two purposes; it both

suggests an alternative faith and downplays the differences between the characters and the audience.

Biblical allusion is a common practice for the characters of Troilus and Criseyde. Even Pandarus, whose personal philosophy is incompatible with Biblical teaching, quotes Ecclesiastes when encouraging Troilus to express his pain: "The wise seith, 'Wo hym that is allone, / For, and he falle, he hath non helpe to ryse'" (I. 694 - 95). The passage in Ecclesiastes reads: "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (4:10). Yet again, when Pandarus argues with Troilus to go to Deiphebus's house to meet Criseyde, he says: "Thow shalt be saved by thi feyth, in trouthe" (II. 1503). There are two passages in Luke that could have inspired Pandarus's words. The first passage is Luke 8:48 in which Jesus says to a woman who had healed herself by touching his cloak, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." In Luke 18:42 Jesus heals a blind man, saying, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you." On one level, Chaucer alludes to these passages to suggest subtly to his reader that there is an alternative kind of faith and love that the characters in the poem do not consider. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Chaucer often includes Christian allusions to encourage a comparison between the pagan gods and the Christian God, which inevitably reflects poorly on the former. Pagan gods such as Fortune and Cupid may be the source of temporary happiness, but, according to medieval Christianity, only God is the source of permanent, true happiness. At the end of Book I, the narrator informs the reader that Pandarus thinks in terms of Biblical analogies to achieve his pagan ends:

> For everi wight that hath an hous to found
> Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
> With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
> And sende his hertes line out fro withinne
> Aldirfirst his purpos for to wynne.
> Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,
> And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte. (I. 1065 - 71)

Jesus tells a similar tale in Luke 14:28-30. The purpose of Jesus's speech, however, is not to encourage earthly pursuits, but to encourage his audience to realize the unimportance of earthly goods. He tells them that if anyone who comes to him does not "[hate] even his own life–he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). Pandarus, of course, does not attempt to understand the meaning of these words and applies the concept incorrectly. A subsequent close study of Pandarus's language will reveal that he uses words as tools; language is merely an effective way to achieve a result for him. Pandarus's manipulative use of language illustrates to the audience the importance of paying attention to the subtler connotations of one's words.

Like Pandarus, Criseyde also uses Biblical imagery; she uses this imagery to swear that her intentions in the relationship with Troilus are pure. Criseyde says "by that God that bought us bothe two, / In alle thyng is myn entente cleene" (III. 1165-66). It is ironic that Criseyde argues her sincerity by using a phrase which distinctly describes the Christian God's redemption of human beings. Criseyde's love clearly does not resemble God's love for humanity, for if it did, the tragedy of the poem would not occur. Unlike God's love, and like the love of many human beings, Criseyde's love is limited and weak. Despite the inappropriateness of this comparison, the narrator continues to equate Criseyde and Christ: "What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so / Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye" (III. 1576 - 78). The narrator attempts to raise Criseyde in the reader's estimation by comparing her forgiveness for Pandarus's manipulations with Christ's forgiveness of human sin. This comparison is, as C. David Benson says, "astonishing," and once again the reader is reminded how far Criseyde is from living up to the standard that the narrator sets for her (184). Although Chaucer uses religious language to encourage the reader to evaluate the characters of Troilus and Criseyde, he does not use it to encourage the reader to be detached from the characters. Indeed, another function of religious language in this poem is to encourage medieval readers to relate more completely with the characters and

see the characters as mirrors in which readers can view themselves and gain self-understanding.

Chaucer uses religious language and imagery not only to suggest an alternative faith that the characters of Troilus and Criseyde do not consider, but also to help bridge the gap between his audience and the characters in the poem. It is interesting to note that Chaucer's audience would be inclined to identify with Chaucer's Trojan characters since members of medieval English society believed themselves to have descended from ancient Troy. However, by putting medieval Christian words in the mouths of his pagan Trojan characters, Chaucer erases even more of the difference between his characters and his audience, allowing the audience to empathize more completely with the characters and gain self-knowledge as a result. The historical distance between Troilus and Criseyde and the medieval individual who reads Chaucer's poem becomes less of an issue for the reader when the Trojan lovers use words that are familiar to him/her. Such erasing of difference presumably makes it easier for the reader to learn from the characters of Troilus and Criseyde and to sympathize with their dilemmas. Chaucer thus uses this anachronism both to address his concerns about reader interpretation, and to ensure that the reader considers Troilus and Criseyde with good will and self-reflection.

There are numerous words in Troilus and Criseyde that can be interpreted as having Christian connotations. In a subsequent chapter, this study will address how words such as "grace," "God," and "love," which are often used in descriptions of Cupid, the God of Love, and the sensual love that he inspires, can also be interpreted as being Christian references to Christ, the God of Love. Like the pattern of religious language, the pattern of violent language which is used to describe courtly love reveals much about the characters who use it. Eugene Vance rightly connects the violence of love imagery in the poem with the Trojan context. Troy is a city with a history of erotic violence; before the

siege, Agamemnon took Chryses's daughter from her home, the war was caused when Paris stole Helen away from her husband, and Agamemnon returned from Troy only to be killed by his wife's lover. Vance admits that "oxymorons of violence" are conventional in lovers's speech, but claims that the "dramatic setting . . . cannot fail to point outward to an extramural violence that is not figurative but 'real'" (283). With the exception of a few occasions when Criseyde voices her fear of the Greeks, the characters in Troilus and Criseyde often do not act or speak as if they live in war time. For the most part, they respond inappropriately to the war; the war is a trivial occurance in their lives–it is a convenient reason for Troilus to look impressive as he rides past Criseyde's window (II. 624 - 44).[7] Pandarus displays his own unconcern for the war when Criseyde asks him if his good news "is than th'assege aweye?" (II. 123). Pandarus tells her that his news (that Troilus loves her) is far superior, "bet than swyche fyve" (126). Even Troilus, whose position as prince obliges him to defend the city, does not give the war a place of significance in his life. The narrator tells the reader that love causes Troilus to abandon care for the protection of the city:

> But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,
> Ne also for the rescous of the town,
> Ne made hym thus in armes for to madde,
> But only, lo, for this conclusioun:
> To liken hire the bet for his renoun. (I. 477 - 81)

Troilus's motivations are certainly questionable. His social responsibilities as ruler require him to fight for the welfare of his people, not pursue the favor of a lady. Chaucer assuredly intends for his noble audience to take note of Troilus's negative example. Obviously, Troilus's shifting of priorities does not occur because he is a poor leader or a selfish man; indeed, the poem is full of praise for Troilus and his accomplishments. Rather, when Troilus falls in love he is faced with a difficult situation, for according to

---

[7] Troilus's emphasis on love rather than war, and his "ineffectual" attitude (which will be discussed later in this chapter), can also be evaluated as part of the larger questions surrounding gender in Troilus and Criseyde. These gender issues, however, are outside the scope of this study.

the principles of courtly love, the love of one's lady is of utmost importance. Arlyn Diamond, in her article entitled "Troilus and Criseyde: The Politics of Love," argues that this conflict between social and romantic responsibility is an inextricable part of courtly love:

> Perfect love makes the war recede, but such love cannot make war nor Pandarus disappear. Each utopian moment in the poem is yoked with its counter, in a complicated series of doublings controlled by Chaucer's poetic mastery and our sense of ambiguity as the natural order of things. As a result, the dual allegiances of courtly love–to a vision of harmony and a feudal-patriarchal social order–are left unresolved. The knight-lover's loyalties on the one hand to his female counterpart and on the other to his male structure of dominance can only be maintained as long as the implications of those loyalties are never fully explored. In courtly literature, the knight can never be shown to be conscious of the economic, political, or sexual sources of his authority. . . . Were Criseyde to beg Troilus to flee with her from Troy, she would destroy him more thoroughly than she does by betraying him, since her betrayal merely calls into doubt her character, not the assumptions of his love. (99)

As Diamond suggests, because courtly love is by definition aristocratic, and because the aristocrats were the ruling class, a division of loyalties between courtly love and social responsibility is unavoidable. This conflict is evident in the words of all the characters. Their use of traditional, violent descriptions of love reveals that the narrator, Pandarus, Troilus and Criseyde are all caught between love and war.

The contest between love and war in this poem is not a close one, for all the characters dedicate their attention to love and disregard the war. The characters's neglectful attitude toward the war is mirrored in their language. The narrator describes Criseyde's process of falling in love with Troilus in terms of a siege: ". . . his manhod and his pyne / Made love withinne hire for to myne" (II. 676-77). In the next Book, he goes on to describe the consummation of Troilus and Criseyde's love in similarly violent terms: "What myghte or may the sely larke seye, / Whan that the sperhauk hath it in his foot?" (III. 1191-92). Troilus's descriptions of love are often characterized by a "theme of bondage" (Barney

3); he says that Criseyde's eyes are "nettes" that "bynde" him (III. 1355-58). Vance argues that this kind of language reveals that the Trojans use signs inappropriately:

> Troy is a city where people have forgotten how to use signs properly, and as a result their erotic discourse of love is ornamented with figurative violence of the most extravagant sort: arrow-wounds, hemorrhaging, chopping, slashing, evisceration, starvation, drowning, chaining, madness, snaring, convulsions, hanging, poisoning, imprisonment, dismemberment, suicide, enslavement, etc. But all this merely figurative violence is materializing historically outside the city's walls. These characters speak so "poetically" that they are voluntarily blind, as we must not be, to the referential context of their figures, which is the war between the Trojans and the Greeks. (283)

The language used by the narrator, Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus reveals how unaware they are of the connotations of their words. They cannot see that their conventional lovers speech no longer merely exaggerates the pain of unrequited love–now, in wartime, it also alludes to the actual violence and death of the Trojan war. However, the characters are distressingly blind to this shift in signification; they speak and fail to recognize what their words imply. If they did recognize the connotations of their words, as does the reader, they would understand that the war deserves more of their conscious attention and concern. Perhaps they would also realize that being more concerned for their love affair than for the Trojan violence and destruction (in their actions and language) is potentially disastrous for Troy. This criticism falls particularly heavily on Troilus whose role as prince and warrior requires him to strengthen and serve Troy. The pattern of violent love language, like the pattern of Christian language, demonstrates again that not only Troilus, but the narrator, Criseyde and Pandarus misuse language. Having established that the characters have hermeneutic "bad habits" by way of introduction, it is now appropriate to study their use of language in more detail. This closer study will analyze how each character manipulates and misreads language in order to reveal his or her individual hermeneutic and linguistic shortcomings.

Much has already been revealed about the narrator by studying his use of language; for instance, his language clearly shows that he wants to avoid responsibility for the poem. His language also shows that he becomes emotionally involved with the events of the story as he relates them. One way in which the narrator's emotional involvement is exposed in his language is through his consistent shifting of rhetorical style throughout the poem. While he often uses a high, epic style in the hopes of maintaining a formal relationship with his subject, he also often lapses into a colloquial, intimate style which reveals his personal connection with the events of the story. Donaldson argues that the narrator uses these shifts in style (naming these two the "epic high road" and the "broad highway of trite moralization") in the attempt to deny that the story of Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus, "so full of the illusion of happiness, comes to nothing–that the potential of humanity comes to nothing" (99). Many critics have noted that the narrator appears to become particularly desperate near the end of the poem. This desperation manifests itself in loss of words, protestations of truth, and displays of irritation. For instance, when called upon to relay Diomede's words to Criseyde, the narrator breaks off in annoyance:

> What sholde I telle his wordes that he seyde?
> He spak inought for o day at the meeste. (V. 946 - 47)

The narrator does not even attempt to hide his dislike for Diomede who is, in the narrator's eyes, the true villain of the story. Yet another way that the narrator struggles against the story's conclusion is to distance himself from his sources. Ironically, the sources that have been his allies throughout the poem become his enemies at the end of the poem. In Book V, for instance, the narrator insinuates that his "auctores" are responsible for some kind of misreading themselves, rather than positively stating that Criseyde is in the wrong: "Men seyn–I not–that she yaf hym hire herte" (V. 1050).

The narrator's discomfort with the last book also causes him to develop a linguistic tic. When he is uncomfortable with his subject matter, the narrator begins to use the phrase

"But trewly" in an attempt to strengthen his uncertain narratorial voice. Phillip Pulsiano states that such protestations of truth are "Chaucerian signposts that something is amiss, that what we have in actuality is rift between word and thought" (154). Certainly, the narrator uses this phrase in order to hide his discomfort and uncertainty from the reader. The narrator uses this phrase on three particularly distressing occasions. The narrator's linguistic tic first appears at the end of his final description of Criseyde:

> She sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal,
> The best ynorisshed ek that myghte be,
> And goodly of hire speche in general,
> Charitable, estatlich, lusty, fre;
> Ne nevere mo ne lakked hire pite;
> Tendre-herted, slydynge of corage;
> But trewely, I kan nat telle hire age. (V. 820-26, emphasis added)

After a characteristically flattering description of Criseyde, the narrator weakens when he mentions her "slydynge . . . corage." At this point, he resorts to the "But trewely" phrase to strengthen his voice. The narrator uses this phrase for a second time when he must finally admit to the suffering caused by Criseyde's actions:

> But trewely, the storie telleth us,
> Ther made nevere womman moore wo
> Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus. (1051 - 53, emphasis added)

This admission also causes the narrator to falter. Interestingly, in this passage, the narrator again distances himself from his sources: "the storie telleth us" (1051, emphasis added). In this passage, the narrator attempts to blend into the passive audience who has no control over the matter of the story. The narrator uses the "But trewely" phrase one more time when describing how long it was before Criseyde betrayed Troilus for Diomede:

> But trewely, how longe it was bytwene
> That she forsok hym for this Diomede,
> Ther is non auctour telleth it, I wene.
> Take every man now to his bokes heede,
> He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.
> For though that he bigan to wowe hire soone,
> Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone. (1093 - 99, emphasis added)

This passage is similar to the one in which the narrator defends the speed at which Criseyde falls in love with Troilus. Again, the narrator brings up speed as if it could justify her actions, or at least maintain her image as a gentle lady rather than a wanton. Also, the narrator again appeals to old stories as his witnesses in this passage. There is an antagonistic tone to this appeal, however, as if he dares the reader to use the other sources to prove him wrong.

Carolyn Dinshaw argues that the narrator uses the "But trewely" phrase to fill in the holes left by his own doubts; "the narrator wants to believe in Criseyde; he tries rather desperately to control those gaping holes, rushing in with 'But trewely . . .' after nearly every ambiguous or difficult detail that occurs to him" (62). The same explanation can be given for the narrator's use of phrases like "shortly forto seye," and "at shorte wordes for to telle" which occur several times in the last book (including lines 848, 1009, and 1032). These phrases also illustrate the narrator's discomfort with the story as well as his desire to rush past the painful parts. Thus, the narrator uses this phrase when he must describe the agonizing moment when Diomede wins Criseyde:

> This Diomede is come unto Criseyde;
> And shortly, lest that ye my tale breke,
> So wel he for hymselven spak and seyde
> That alle hire sikes soore adown he leyde;
> And finaly, the sothe for to seyne,
> He refte hire of the grete of al hire peyne. (1031 - 36, emphasis added)

For this most difficult description, the narrator must use both the stock phrase that appeals to truth ("The sothe for to seyne," of course, bearing a strong resemblance to "But trewely") and the phrase that attempts to speed up the story. The narrator blames rushing the story on the audience ("lest that ye my tale breke"). However, there is no danger of the audience interrupting his tale at such a climactic moment. The narrator objects because of his own discomfort. Indeed, he can only bring himself to describe Criseyde's union with Diomede in the vaguest of terms: "He refte hire of the grete of al hire peyne." At

moments like these, the narrator's story seems to be collapsing around him and there are many "gaping holes" to control, most of them involving Criseyde.

In the passages we have just looked at, the narrator unsuccessfully attempts to influence the reader. The narrator's words have such a contrary effect because they signify his anxiety over Criseyde's untruth. Although he attempts to maintain the flow of the story, the narrator's anxieties, including his doubts about Criseyde, his resentment for his sources, and his apprehension about the poetic process, are revealed in his language. The techniques that the narrator uses to influence the reader provide examples of how the narrator imposes his will on the text. He attempts to color the readers's interpretation of the events he describes because he gives his own concern about the story precedence over the integrity of the story itself. As will now be discussed, Troilus is guilty of the same linguistic and hermeneutic practice; Troilus, like the narrator, places his own emotional upheaval before truthful interpretation.

Troilus's life changes when he falls in love. Everything he does and says is affected by his love for Criseyde. We have already seen how he fights for Criseyde's admiration rather than for the protection of the city. Troilus's love also causes him constantly to misread signs. Troilus misreads dreams (as will be discussed in the next chapter), he misreads Boethius, and he misreads the words of other characters. As evidence of his assertion that Troilus's emotional state causes him to misinterpret signs, John Fleming cites the scene in which Troilus interprets the significance of Diomede's posession of Criseyde's brooch. Fleming notes that Chaucer calls the brooch a "signe" and explains that "the 'sign' of Deiphoebus' victory is the sign of Troilus' defeat" (249). Troilus's interpretation, however, is colored by his grief:

> In the face of this ocular proof, Troilus is unable to persevere in his belief in Criseyde's "truth," yet his exegesis of the specific "sign" is ludicrously eccentric. In an outburst of mawkish, adolescent self-pity he cries out that

> Criseyde has given the brooch to Diomede with the sole intention of inflicting pain on her discarded lover. (249)

Despite his excessively condemnatory tone, Fleming's evaluation of Troilus's interpretation is sound. Judith Ferster also comments on Troilus's tendency to misread; she characterizes Troilus as "a prime example of a reader who imposes his will on a text" (11). Ferster cites the scene in Book II when Troilus reads Criseyde's letter and argues that Troilus "reads Criseyde's letter selectively, suppressing signs of her hesitation and emphasizing her willingness to love him" (11). The narrator describes Troilus's interpretation of the letter:

> . . . . [Troilus] took al for the beste
> That she hym wroot, for somwhat he byheld
> On which hym thoughte he myghte his herte reste,
> Al covered she tho wordes under sheld.
> Thus to the more worthi part he held,
> That what for hope and Pandarus byheste,
> His grete wo foryede he at the leste. (II. 1324-30)

As Ferster suggests, Troilus interprets Criseyde's cautious letter positively. He does not contemplate the significance of Criseyde's guarded tone, which the reader knows is representative of her feelings for him. Ultimately, however, the fault for Troilus's hermeneutical failure in interpreting the letter must be placed on both Troilus and Criseyde, for Troilus is unable "to resolve [the letter's] ambiguities" and Criseyde is "by intention ambiguous" (Fleming 229).

Troilus responds to Criseyde's failure to appear in Troy after joining the Greeks in a similarly willful way. Troilus misreads the significance of Criseyde's absence several times rather than admit to himself that she will not be faithful to her promise. When Criseyde does not come by noon, Troilus invents an excuse for her absence:

> For aught I woot, byfor noon, sikirly,
> Into this town ne comth nat here Criseyde.
> She hath ynough to doone, hardyly,
> To wynnen from hire fader, so trowe I.

> Hire olde fader wol yet make hire dyne
> Er that she go–God yeve his herte pyne! (V. 1122-27)

Troilus imagines that Calchas is responsible for Criseyde's lateness; Calchas, of course, is the obvious scapegoat since he is to blame for Criseyde's departure from Troy. When evening falls and Criseyde has still not come, Troilus must again misread the evidence to maintain his hope:

> By God, I woot hire menyng now, Pandare!
> Almoost, ywys, al newe was my care.
>
> Now douteles, this lady kan hire good;
> I woot she meneth riden pryvely.
> I comende hire wisdom, by myn hood!
> She wol nat maken peple nycely
> Gaure on hire whan she comth, but softely
> By nyghte into the town she thenketh ride.
> And, deere brother, thynk nat longe t'abide. (1147-55)

Troilus imagines that Criseyde, still intent on secrecy, would want to travel in the dark. Of course, Criseyde does not come that evening and Troilus must once again misinterpret Criseyde's words in order to maintain his confidence in her. The narrator tells the reader that

> He thoughte he misacounted hadde his day,
> And seyde, "I understonde have al amys.
> For thilke nyght I last Criseyde say,
> She seyde 'I shal ben here, if that I may,
> Er that the moone, O deere herte swete,
> The Leoun passe, out of this Ariete.' (1185-90)

Indeed, Troilus remembers correctly. Criseyde said that

> Er Phebus suster, Lucina the sheene,
> The Leoun passe out of this Ariete,
> I wol ben here, withouten any wene. (IV. 1591-93)

However, this astrologically determined date is somewhat ambiguous and open to various interpretations, so Criseyde also specifies that she will meet Troilus on "the tenthe day" (IV. 1595). Troilus misunderstands her meaning, however, by forgetting this definitive

statement. Troilus's attitude toward language becomes more manipulative throughout the poem and throughout Troilus's relationship with Pandarus. Pandarus, the master manipulator of words, is partially responsible for Troilus's deceptive use of language because Pandarus teaches Troilus some of his own tricks.

Troilus's relationship with Pandarus exists almost entirely in language. Pandarus even helps Troilus realize the power of words. Although Pandarus controls Troilus through language, Troilus shows signs of learning Pandarus's linguistic tricks. For instance, when Pandarus accurately names himself a pimp, Troilus protests Pandarus's choice of words.

> And this that thow doost, calle it gentilesse,
> Compassioun, and felawship, and trist.
> Departe it so, for wyde-wher is wist
> How that ther is diversite requered
> Bytwixen thynges like, as I have lered. (III. 402-6)

Troilus realizes that words have the power to redefine what they describe in the minds of those that use them–Pandarus has played this redefinition game all along. The act of pimping, Troilus implies, can be justified by renaming it compassion or friendship. Troilus has learned too well from Pandarus, for he subsequently plays Pandarus's role of panderer when he offers to provide Pandarus with women (409-413). Unfortunately, Pandarus's language does more than cause Troilus to commit morally questionable acts. Troilus eventually perishes because of the effect that Pandarus's, Criseyde's and his own words have had on him. He does not realize the poignancy of his words when he tells Pandarus ". . . thow sleest me with thi speche!" (IV. 455). Troilus is harmed not only by the effects of the words of Criseyde and Pandarus, however. Troilus's destruction is also caused by his inabilty to interpret other sources of knowledge "correctly," including Boethius.

Although the story of Troilus and Criseyde is supposed to have occured before Boethius wrote his Consolation of Philosophy, Chaucer characterizes Troilus (as well as the other characters) as being familiar with Boethian sentiments. Although there is little critical argument over the Boethian nature of these sentiments, it should be noted that they also resemble "pagan" Platonic philosophy which Chaucer represents as being familiar to his characters. Thus, it is possible that Chaucer references Boethius as a convenient summary of Platonism. However, as previously mentioned, regardless of whether Chaucer cites Boethius as a summary of Platonism or not, the function of these allusions in the poem is clear: the Boethian passages represent conclusions that the characters of Troilus and Criseyde should be able to come to without specific knowledge of Christian events. Although Boethius's conclusions are Christian in nature, he achieves them through logic and reason. Furthermore, these debates are presented largely for the benefit of Chaucer's medieval readers. Thus, even if the characters of this poem do not recognize the Christian aspect of the Boethian issues, the medieval readers assuredly will.

It is clear that Chaucer includes the words and ideas of Boethius, as he includes the words and ideas of the Bible, both because he values the philosophical issues dealt with in the text, and in order to downplay the difference between his audience and his characters. Chaucer also emphasizes his characters's hermeneutic mistakes. In Book IV. 957-1078, Troilus gives a Boethian speech in which he speaks about free will and predestination, presenting Boethius's fatalistic arguments. Unlike Boethius, however, Troilus's argument ceases after giving the arguments against free will. It appears that Troilus ceased reading Boethius at this point, for in The Consolation of Philosophy, Lady Philosophy goes on to defend free will in the same terms as she did predestination. John Fleming asks the interesting and pertinent question: does Chaucer expect his pagan hero to understand Boethius's meaning? (203). Despite the fact that "several distinguished Chaucerians" answer "no," Fleming makes the valid point that this passage is

> a Chaucerian manipulation of a Boethian text. Furthermore, no conceivable poetic purpose is served by the Boethian presence that does not involve a thoughtful comparison of the Boethian text in its original and in its translated contexts. Troilus' speech is an obvious emblem of thwarted, incomplete, imperfect thought. . . . By what license shall we exempt Troilus from the intellectual responsibility of the Boethian text– except by first discharging him from the presumptive obligation of rationality? (204)

Accepting Chaucer's fabrication that Troilus has read Boethius, it is apparent that Troilus has not read enough. Troilus stops reading at Book 5, Prose 3, and never learns the answers to his questions about free will. In The Consolation of Philosophy, Lady Philosophy goes on to explain that God's foreknowledge is like human knowledge of the present. She says that there is no conflict between free will and providence because "just as the knowledge of present things imposes no necessity on what is happening, so foreknowledge imposes no necessity on what is going to happen" (V. pr iv). It is even more unfortunate that Troilus never perceives Lady Philosophy's concluding message to Boethius in the Consolation, which is that the true purpose of human existence is contemplation of the eternal and the pursuit of virtue. During his life, Troilus remains interested in earthly joys and concerns. Only after his death does he realize, as Boethius does at the end of the Consolation, that the instability of earthly affairs makes them unworthy of his life's dedication. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Criseyde and Pandarus also give Boethian speeches in the course of the poem which reveal their similar inability to comprehend fully Boethius's message. Considering Troilus's misinterpretation of language, it is not surprising that his use of language is similarly flawed.

Troilus uses the language of the courtly lover and adopts the motivations and attitudes that go along with that convention. Troilus's love affects him positively in some ways. The narrator says that after Pandarus brings Troilus out of his depression, "he bicom the

frendlieste wight, / The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre, / The thriftiest, and oon the beste knyght / That in his tyme was or myghte be" (I. 1079 - 82). Unfortunately, love does not have a permanently positive effect on Troilus. Throughout the poem, Troilus is most often passive and morose; while in these moods, he is certainly not the "frendlieste wight." Troilus's courtly language molds his passive attitude, which, in turn, causes him to both misinterpret signs and neglect his social responsiblities. Troilus's attitude also helps to bring about the destruction of his relationship with Criseyde. In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer criticizes courtly love through the character of Troilus. Even though courtly love is a common poetic subject for Chaucer–a fact that has in the past led many critics to believe he fully endorsed this attitude toward love–it appears that he repeatedly and subtly calls courtly love into question in this poem. Troilus's linguistic style is part of the greater juxtaposition of courtly and Christian love, and helps to show that courtly love is stagnant, self-indulgent, and ultimately destructive. One image that Chaucer uses consistently throughought his poetry to characterize courtly love as sterile and destructive is that of the temple of Venus. Descriptions of the violence and death that accompany Venerian influence are found in The Parliament of Fowls, The House and Fame, and The Knight's Tale.

Implicit in Troilus's conventional style of speech is the equation of lover with victim. Troilus takes on the role of victim immediately after falling in love. In his first observation of love, Troilus speaks of love's injustice:

> . . . . Lord, so ye lyve al in lest,
> Ye loveres! For the konnyngeste of yow,
> That serveth most ententiflich and best,
> Hym tit as often harm therof as prow.
> Youre hire is quyt ayeyn, ye, God woot how!
> Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse.
> In feith, youre ordre is ruled in good wise! (I. 330-36)

Despite the fact that Troilus has not experienced the injustice of love, he chooses to give this conventional lover's complaint. Troilus could have responded in many other ways; he could have spoken in praise of love, for instance, giving a speech similar to Antigone's song. Antigone speaks of love as an entirely positive thing:

> Ye, blisful god, han me so wel byset
> In love, iwys, that al that bereth lif
> Ymagynen ne kouthe how to be bet. (II. 834 -36)

Admittedly, Antigone's song about how love inspires lovers to be virtuous and happy is juxtaposed with Criseyde's monologue on how painful love can be. Criseyde, however, has more reason than Troilus to contemplate love's pain since she has been in love before; Troilus has never experienced love. Why does Troilus not see love as the possibility for a blessing? Troilus's choice to express himself with apathetic victimized language has many negative consequences; he becomes as apathetic and victimized in his actions as he is in his language. Even Pandarus loses patience with Troilus's ineffectuality at one point, declaring that he was a "wrecched mouses herte" (III. 736). Had Troilus been more assertive and involved with active solutions rather than his lover's complaints, he might have avoided the tragedy of the poem by taking Criseyde away and marrying her, or by revealing his feelings for her to the parliament. In Book IV, Troilus tells Pandarus that these alternatives had occured to him, but that he was afraid: "Yet drede I moost hire herte to perturbe / With violence" (IV. 561 - 62).

Near the end of the poem, Troilus becomes aware of and regrets his ineffectual attitude. As Troilus prepares to accompany Criseyde to the Greek camp, Troilus wonders at his passivity:

> "Allas," quod he, "thus foul a wrecchednesse,
> Whi suffre ich it? Whi nyl ich it redresse?
> Were it nat bet atones for ty dye
> Than evere more in langour thus to drye?
>
> "Wy nyl I makes atones riche and pore

> To have inough to doon er that she go?
> Why nyl I brynge al Troie upon a roore?
> Whi nyl I slen this Diomede also?
> Why nyl I rather with a man or two
> Stele hire away? Whi wol I this endure?
> Whi nyl I helpen to myn owen cure?" (V. 39-49)

Troilus cannot answer his own questions, however. The narrator must excuse Troilus's inaction, claiming that Troilus would have taken Criseyde away except that he feared for her life (V. 50-56). Thus, even when Troilus realizes his mistake, he is unable to act. He merely waits for Criseyde and mourns her absence. Unfortunately, Troilus is not the only proponent of the doctrines of courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde. Like Troilus, Criseyde complies with the principles of courtly love in her romantic relationship. She adheres to the rules of courtly love, especially the doctrine of secrecy.

Criseyde recognizes how destructive language can be–especially for a courtly lover. She is afraid of "hem that jangle of love" lest they speak ill of her (II. 800). She feels that she must "plesen" such people since their words are damaging:

> For though ther be no cause, yet hem semen
> Al be for harm that folk hire frendes quemen;
> And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,
> Or sown of belles whil that their ben ronge? (II. 802-5)

Criseyde questions not only the negative assumptions and damaging words of gossips, but also their ability to interpret signs "correctly." She suggests that gossips assume ill when a person merely tries to help her friends. The gossips assume the worst, according to Criseyde, even when "ther be no cause." The gossips are like the willfully misinterpreting readers that Chaucer's narrator curses in The House of Fame, for their malicious attitude causes them to misinterpret information. Ironically, in trying to avoid such unjust judgment, Criseyde is guilty of a similar misuse of signs. In pursuing secrecy, Criseyde divorces her words and actions from the truth and, perhaps, unjustly assumes malicious intention on the part of others.

Criseyde's decision to disconnect her words from a truthful signification has many negative consequences–none of which can be blamed on gossips. Because Criseyde follows Pandarus's insinuation that secrecy is to be desired in her relationship with Troilus, she is unable to declare her love for Troilus, stay in Troy, and avoid the tragedy which ruins her reputation even beyond her own lifetime. The negative consequences of Criseyde's adherence to secrecy, like the negative consequences of Troilus's language, signal Chaucer's criticism of courtly love. In his book Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, Dodd notes that secrecy is a significant part of the representation of courtly love in Troilus and Criseyde: "The courtly love doctrine most prominent in the Troilus is perhaps the doctrine of secrecy. The importance attached to this idea is, of course, due to the nature of the love treated in the poem" (135). In The Allegory of Love, C. S. Lewis discusses the "nature" of courtly love, and confirms that secrecy is one of the duties of the lover: "The duty of secrecy in love . . . is strongly enforced" (35). Although neither Troilus nor Criseyde realize it, there is an alternative to courtly love: procreative love, or, the medieval Christian view of love. Sensual love is not the only kind of love represented in the poem. There are numerous references to Christian love in Troilus and Criseyde that help to undercut the idealization of courtly love that is central to the characters's representation of it in the poem. The love described in Antigone's song, for instance, is completely compatible with procreative love. Similarly, the numerous Boethian references should remind the reader that human love ought to be kept in agreement with divine and cosmic love.

This study has already shown that there is a gap between Criseyde's words and the truth. Does this gap only appear when she speaks to potential gossips, or is it also a part of her normal communication with Troilus and Pandarus? Julian Wasserman argues that the gap

between Criseyde's words and the truth is a fundamental part of her character. According to Wasserman, Criseyde uses words to "mask reality" (211). He goes on to say that

> her words [are] illusion-creating equivocations. This device is most readily seen in Criseyde when she devotes some seventy lines (II, 694 - 763) to reasons for and some thirty-five lines (II, 771 - 805) to reasons against accepting the love of Troilus, only to announce her decision in a terse two-line speech which borders on a cliche: "He which that nothing undertaketh, / Nothyng n'acheveth, be hym looth or deere" (II, 807-8). Language for Criseyde ceases to be a mediating force between the abstract and the concrete but is, rather, a mask used to create an illusion that is taken for reality. She is, after all, a woman who makes a vow concerning the future just after condescendingly noting the "amphibologies" inherent in prophetic language. (211)

As suggested by Wasserman, Criseyde uses language in a self-conscious and deliberate manner. She manipulates people and protects herself through her words. Criseyde's first letter to Troilus illustrates her cautious, controlling style of communication. The narrator summarizes the content of this letter:

> She thanked hym of al that he wel mente
> Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde
> She nolde noughte, ne make hireselven bonde
> In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,
> She wolde fayn to doon his herte an ese. (II. 1221-25)

Criseyde's letter is, in a word, calculated. She does not make a commitment to Troilus, but encourages him enough in his suit to prevent Pandarus from being displeased. She says she would like to help him, but does not promise her love. She thanks him for his good intentions toward her, but does not obligate herself to become his lover. However, Criseyde's linguistic behavior can be somewhat justified, or Wasserman's condemnation of her can be somewhat softened, when one considers Pandarus's influence over her. Criseyde is fearful, she relies heavily upon the opinions of others, especially Pandarus, and she repeatedly stops thinking in favor of following her uncle's lead and taking the intellectually easy way out. Thus, Criseyde's primary moral failing is not, as Wasserman

suggests, that she is essentially deceitful, but that she is "slyding of corage" and therefore too vulnerable to Pandarus's influence and linguistic deceits.

For all of her verbal manipulation and fear of gossips, there are indications that Criseyde does not wholly understand the power of language. For instance, when she awakes from fainting to discover that Troilus is preparing to kill himself, she tells Troilus that they should "rise, and streght to bedde go, / And there lat us speken of oure wo" (IV 1243-44). While refusing here to play Juliet to Troilus's Romeo, Criseyde may be suggesting something worse, for she does not realize that speaking instigates disasters more often than any other activity in this poem. We have already seen how Troilus's conventional and ineffectual attitude takes root and thrives in his language. Also, as will be discussed, Pandarus's speech is highly destructive. Through speaking, he eases Criseyde's concerns about entering into a love affair with Troilus, encourages Troilus's ill-founded hope that Criseyde will return to Troy, and discourages Troilus from interpreting his dreams. Speaking cannot be considered a safe activity in this poem. Because problematic speaking is usually accompanied by problematic interpreting in this poem, it is now fitting to study Criseyde's interpretive abilities.

Criseyde's reading (or interpreting) habits cause as many dilemmas for her as do her speaking habits. One important instance in which Criseyde reads occurs in Book II when Pandarus finds Criseyde listening to the story of Thebes. This incident, which will be mentioned again in a subsequent chapter, reveals Criseyde's reluctance to read at length and in depth. Criseyde summarizes the story to Pandarus, focusing on the plot:

> This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede;
> And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde
> Thorugh Edippus his sone, and al that dede;
> And here we stynten at thise lettres rede –
> How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,
> Amphiorax, fil thorugh the ground to helle. (II. 100-105)

As Priscilla Martin says, "Criseyde's reading-matter is serious, historical, [and] sobering" (167). Unfortunately, Criseyde is not as "exemplary" a character for reading this story as Martin would suggest. In a story full of moral dilemmas and failures, Criseyde makes not even the slightest allusion to the moral issues of the Thebes story. Laius dies merely "thorugh" Oedipus. Admittedly, Criseyde is merely summarizing the story for her uncle and the purpose of her words is not to give a detailed description of the story; however, the absolute neutrality of her words suggests that she has not perceived the significance of the Thebes story for Troy. It appears that if she did go on to read the saint's lives (as she tells Pandarus she should) with her current uncritical attitude, she would fail to comprehend fully their significance for her. While the reader does not witness Criseyde reading hagiography, he/she does witness her interpretation of, or misinterpretation of, Boethius.

Like Troilus, Criseyde fails to read Boethius in enough depth. Upon hearing that Troilus believes that she loves a man called Horaste, Criseyde gives a complaint about the instability of earthly fortunes that is inspired by Boethius's Consolation. Criseyde complains that an awareness of the transitoriness of earthly joy means that it is impossible to have joy in life:

> Now if he woot that joie is transitorie,
> As every joye of worldly thyng mot flee,
> Than every tyme he that hath in memorie,
> The drede of lesyng maketh hym that he
> May in no perfit selynesse be;
> And if to lese his joie he sette a myte,
> Than semeth it that joie is worth ful lite. (III. 827-33)

The answer to the dilemma expressed by Criseyde in this passage is answered by Lady Philosophy early on in Boethius's Consolation (2 pr. 4). Lady Philosophy tells Boethius that his mistake is in looking for happiness outside himself; he should be "in possession of [himself]" so that he "will possess something [he] would never wish to lose and

something Fortune could never take away." It is unfortunate that Criseyde never comes to this realization, for she would surely benefit from possessing something that is immune to Fortune. However, Criseyde never realizes that it is possible for her to be free of Fortune. She merely concludes that "Ther is no verray weele in this world heere" (III. 836) and curses jealousy for upsetting Troilus. Criseyde's conclusion is relatively unsophisticated in Boethian terms. It is clear that Criseyde has a lot more to read before she can understand Boethius's solution to the problem of earthly instability. Interestingly, although Troilus appears to have read a bit farther in the Consolation, Criseyde is more capable of acting on her knowledge. Unlike Troilus, Criseyde is constantly aware of the dangers that surround her and is constantly working for her own self-preservation. While Troilus is paralyzed by his knowledge and is unable to act throughout the poem, Criseyde's understanding of earthly instability causes her to be more careful when manoevering around her acquaintances, especially Pandarus.

Criseyde's interpretation of her uncle's words reveals much about how she deals with linguistic signs. Pandarus is continually talking to Criseyde in the poem–actually, he is continually talking Criseyde into things. Criseyde is aware that Pandarus has an agenda, however, and realizes the need for caution in her dealings with him. For instance, when Pandarus comes to Criseyde to make his first complaint on Troilus's behalf, Criseyde thinks to herself that she must try to discover more than he is telling her: ". . . I shal felen what he meneth, ywis" (II. 387). By the end of his speech, Criseyde appears to be completely convinced:

> Criseyde which that wel neigh starf for feere,
> So as she was the ferfulleste wight
> That myghte be, and herde ek with hire ere
> And saugh the sorwful ernest of the knyght,
> And in his preier ek saugh noon unryght,
> And for the harm that myghte ek fallen moore,
> She gan to rewe and dredde hire wonder soore. (II. 449-55)

Arthur Mizener argues that this passage reveals Criseyde's sincere belief "in Pandar's threat that unless she yields a little both he and Troilus will die" (61). Despite her apparent conviction that Pandarus is telling the truth, however, Criseyde does keep some critical distance. After expressing her fear for the lives of Troilus and Pandarus, Criseyde thinks to herself: "It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie" (462). Criseyde is aware that she must proceed carefully lest this arrangement compromise her situation.

One difficulty with studying Criseyde's use and interpretation of language is the relative absence of her thoughts and words from the poem. The reader hears much more about Troilus's thoughts than about Criseyde's. In an essay called "The Opaque Text of Chaucer's Criseyde," C. David Benson argues that the narrator keeps the reader away from Criseyde's mind. He says that the reader sees her "public words and behavior" (21), but that her "heart remains hidden" (27). Benson links this neglect of Criseyde's inner life with the "social marginality of women" (20) and argues that it results in Criseyde becoming "an open text . . . . [who] does not represent a unified or even complex authorial statement of meaning, but instead challenges each reader to make her new" (27). Benson overstates Criseyde's ambiguity and unknowability; we learn about Criseyde's inner life, for instance, through her interior monologues in Book II. Benson does, however, introduce an important point about Criseyde's lack of voice which, of course, does not excuse her for her part in the tragedy of the poem. Ironically, Criseyde is aware of her lack of voice; she knows that there is nothing she could say to counteract the condemning stories that will be heard about her for years to come.

> Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
> Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
> No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
> O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!
> Thorughout the world my belle shal be ronge!
> And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.
> Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle! (V. 1058-64)

Criseyde describes herself as being used by speech, as being the object of linguistic play. She describes how her voice will not be heard in the future, but she will be "rolled" on the tongues of others, stories will disgrace her, and her metaphorical bell will be rung. Although Criseyde's future speechlessness does not happen in the time of the poem, it is foreshadowed within the poem; Criseyde is spoken about more than she speaks: Troilus and Pandarus speak about her, Deiphebus's guests speak about her, Calchas negotiates her trade with the Greeks, and Hector and the people of Troy discuss her at the parliament. While Criseyde is someone who gets used by language, Pandarus is someone who uses people through language. Pandarus is a powerful figure in the poem precisely because of his ability to manipulate others using words.

Pandarus revels in rhetoric and double-meanings and uses language in his vicarious enjoyment of life. Pandarus's use of words to manipulate and enjoy the actions of others has led critics to characterize Pandarus as a second narrator in the poem; while the narrator creates the poem, Pandarus creates the love affair. Carolyn Dinshaw summarizes Pandarus's craftsmanship: "Critics have noted that Pandarus, in creating his 'werk,' is much like a poet creating a text, inventing scenes, planning dialogue, 'shaping' (2.1363) the plot–a poet being a 'shaper' (scop) in Old English" (65). Plato introduced the idea of the poet as, first and foremost, a liar, a creator of fictions, who makes his lies attractive and seductive by means of rhetorical embellishment. This definition of the poet describes both the narrator and Pandarus perfectly. Pandarus's language certainly encourages this characterization of him as a poet. The narrator and Pandarus use similar words to describe their tasks. Pandarus refers to the affair as a "matere" on which he must think (I. 1062). The narrator also uses the word "matere" to describe the content of the poem (I. 53). Also, as already mentioned, Pandarus uses the Biblical metaphor of building a house to describe how he must plan his own "werk" carefully (I. 1071). Similarly, in the proem to Book II, the narrator refers to his translation as "werk" (II. 16). Pandarus also uses words

like "erand" and "grete emprise" to describe his pandering (II. 72, 73). In addition to these characterizations of Pandarus as poet, there are also several personal parallels between Pandarus and the narrator. For instance, Pandarus and the narrator have similar attitudes toward love. As Donald Rowe notes, "Both are presented as unsuccessful in love . . . and see themselves as servants of love's servants. Both affirm that love is a good and take upon themselves substantial labors in love's behalf, insisting that they do so only for the benefit of others" (153). Other parallels include their love for Criseyde, and, as previously suggested, their voyeurism. In this poem, voyeurism characterizes poets. In his book, The Medieval Poet as Voyeur, A. C. Spearing notes that Pandarus and the narrator are often present "at supposedly private moments" (121). Spearing says that Chaucer emphasizes the voyeurism inherent in the story: "Repeatedly, the characters gain privacy with some effort, and the effect of the effort is to call attention to the voyeuristic nature of Chaucer's position and ours as unseen witnesses" (126). As poets, or men who orchestrate action rather than act themselves, Pandarus and the narrator both delight in watching the events for which they are responsible. Thus, while Pandarus authors and watches the consummation of Troilus and Criseyde's love from the hearth, the narrator authors and watches Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus through his pen and paper and imagination.

As a poet of sorts, Pandarus both tells old stories and makes up new ones. He does not tell these stories for the love of poetry, however. Benson notes the practicality of Pandarus's story-telling:

> Pandarus's fictions, for all their wit, are shrewdly crafted to produce a predetermined result. As he explains to Criseyde, although some men "delite" in narrating their stories with "subtyl art," yet "in hire entencioun / Hire tale is al for som conclusioun" (II.256-9). He cannot imagine a fiction that is not utilitarian. (Chaucer's Troilus 93-4)

Pandarus's linguistic motto could be, as the narrator says, "He roughte nought what unthrift that he seyde" (IV. 431), with the added phrase "as long as he got what he wanted

out of saying it." Pandarus certainly tells stories for a specific purpose. His first verbal attempt to bring Troilus out of sorrow is full of allusions to stories. He tells Troilus of Oenone's advice for lovers to complain of their pain, quotes Biblical stories, and tells Troilus the story of Niobe who turned to marble while grieving. None of these stories are for Troilus's moral improvement, nor are they for his entertainment; Pandarus merely wants to persuade Troilus to reveal the cause of his sorrow and yield to Pandarus the "maistery." Although Troilus dismisses Pandarus's old stories as useless, he might well have benefitted from paying closer attention to Pandarus's methods, for Pandarus's old stories are eventually successful in encouraging Troilus to share his secrets. Pandarus is similarly successful when he composes his own tales. In the course of the poem, Pandarus tells two apparently original stories which help him to achieve the union of Troilus and Criseyde.

The first original story that Pandarus tells is about Polyphete's threat to Criseyde's property. Pandarus first tells this story to Deiphebus:

> Lo, sire, I have a lady in this town,
> That is my nece, and called is Criseyde,
> Which some men wolden don oppressioun,
> And wrongfully han hire possessioun;
> Wherefore I of youre lordship yow biseche
> To ben oure frend, withouten more speche. (II. 1416-21)

Pandarus's story is designed to stimulate specific reactions in both Deiphebus and Criseyde. The story appeals to Deiphebus's sympathy and natural inclination to "alle honour and bounte" (1444) while Criseyde's instinct for self-preservation is excited by Pandarus's words. In short, both audience members having been convinced, Deiphebus invites Criseyde to dinner (at Pandarus's suggestion) and she does not refuse.

Pandarus's story about Horaste is also designed to have a specific effect on his "audience," specifically Criseyde. This story appeals to Criseyde's pity and love for Troilus:

> [Troilus] is come in swich peyne and distresse
> That, but he be al fully wood by this,
> He sodeynly mot falle into wodnesse,
> But if God helpe; and cause whi this is:
> He seith hym told is of a frend of his,
> How that ye sholden love oon hatte Horaste;
> For sorwe of which this nyght shal ben his laste. (III. 791-98)

This story initially upsets Criseyde and causes her to cry out against the instability of earthly happiness. In order for this story's objective to be realized, however, Pandarus must present some supporting arguments. Pandarus uses proverbs, like "peril is with drecchyng in ydrawe," to suggest that Troilus's life is in danger. He also uses metaphors to solicit Criseyde's cooperation:

> Nece, alle thyng hath tyme, I dar avowe;
> For whan a chaumbre afire is or an halle,
> Wel more nede is, it sodeynly rescowe
> Than to dispute and axe amonges alle
> How this candel in the strawe is falle. (III. 853 - 59)

Finally, after much fabrication, Pandarus is successful. The narrator tells the reader that Criseyde's pity overwhelms her caution because Pandarus's story so resembles truth:

> This accident so pitous was to here,
> And ek <u>so like a sooth</u> at prime face
> And Troilus hire knyght to hir so deere,
> His prive comyng, and the siker place,
> That though that she did hym as thanne a grace,
> Considered alle thynges as they stoode,
> No wonder is, syn she did al for goode. (III. 918-24, emphasis added)

Pandarus excels as a story-teller. Here, Pandarus uses his experience in love to portray a lover's distress. He has already told Troilus that he knows much about the concerns of lovers; "I, that have in love so ofte assayed / Grevances, oughte konne . . ." (I. 846-47). Thus, Pandarus uses his knowledge in order to gain the trust and cooperation of both

Troilus and Criseyde. Pandarus does not care if his words do not point to truth–he speaks in order to accomplish a specific purpose, regardless of the truth. As will now be discussed, much of Pandarus's verbal manipulation occurs when soliciting Troilus's confidence.

Pandarus uses many similar rhetorical devices to convince Troilus to talk to him. Some of his techniques include: appealing to their friendship, offering his help, quoting proverbs that suggest the benefits of expressing one's grief, claiming that Troilus owes Pandarus this information since he knows of Pandarus's troubles, offering to be Troilus's go-between, and berating Troilus's "coward herte, . . . ire and folissh wilfulnesse" (I. 792 - 93). Pandarus also uses arguments from The Consolation of Philosophy to encourage Troilus to confide in him. When Troilus complains that "Fortune is my fo" (I. 837), Pandarus admonishes Troilus for his misunderstanding of the fickle Goddess. Pandarus takes the role of Lady Philosophy in this speech, expressing wonder that Troilus does not know that Fortune's fickleness affects every human being:

> Woost thow nat wel that Fortune is comune
> To everi manere wight in som degree?
> And yet thow hast this comfort, lo, parde,
> That, as hire joies moten overgon,
> So mote hire sorwes passen everechon. (I. 843-47)

Pandarus's speech is a faithful interpretation of Boethius Book 2, Prose 3. Pandarus's suggested response to Fortune's mutability, however, does not follow in Lady Philosophy's argument. Pandarus tells Troilus to

> Lat be thy wo and tornyng to the grounde;
> For whoso list have helyng of his leche,
> To hym byhoveth first unwre his wownde. (I. 856-58)

Lady Philosophy also gives Boethius this advice in The Consolation of Philosophy, but she does so in Book 1, Prose 4, much before discussing a solution to Fortune's fickleness. Lady Philosophy's solution to the problem of Fortune is not to place value in earthly

pleasures, for they are never reliable. Pandarus, however, contradicts Lady Philosophy's dismissal of the benefit of Fortune's gifts; he comforts Troilus by telling him that Fortune's wheel will soon bring him from bad fortune into good: "And yet thow hast this comfort, lo, parde, / That as hire joies moten overgon, / So mote hire sorwes passen everechon" (I. 845 - 47).

It is interesting that, of the three characters in the poem that give Boethian speeches, Pandarus's speech is the most decisive. Pandarus does not ask a question, but answers one. Also, while Troilus and Criseyde merely break off reading at a certain point in their speeches, Pandarus appears to conclude his Boethian discussion. One reason for Pandarus's apparently successful negotiation of Boethian concepts is that he, unlike Troilus and Criseyde, does not attempt to address the challenging issues in the Consolation, like determinism. Ultimately, however, Pandarus's misinterpretation of Boethius is caused by a more serious hermeneutic failing. Pandarus does not merely fail to understand his text, for he does not even attempt to understand it. He merely uses the text as a device to attack Troilus's arguments for privacy. Pandarus takes some of the less challenging bits and pieces from Boethius and places them in an order that suits him without considering the meaning or integrity of the text. Pandarus commits a serious "sin" as a reader: he willfully misreads his text.

Chapter 2: Reading Authority

The characters of Troilus and Criseyde are just as reluctant to understand their pagan gods truthfully as they are to understand each other truthfully. Although the pagan gods in the poem (including Jove, Venus, Cupid, Apollo, Mars and Fortune, among others) do not speak to human beings directly, the characters do have opportunity to evaluate the gods and interpret their meaning; these gods communicate through symbolic actions like dreams, the weather, the position of the stars, and oracles. The characters of Troilus and Criseyde also have access to old stories which provide information about mythical figures. Surprisingly, the gods do not have an advantage over human beings in terms of communication. They have no assurance that human beings will interpret their messages "correctly." One reason for the uncertainty of divine communication is that the characters of Troilus and Criseyde have no more confidence in the validity of the gods's words than in the words of human beings. Criseyde gives the most cynical opinion of the gods voiced in the poem when she tells Troilus that "goddes speken in amphibologies, / And for o soth they tellen twenty lyes" (IV. 1406-7). The characters's distrust of the gods stems from how the gods are "read" by the characters in the poem. In order to understand the gods, the characters must go through an interpretive process, as they do when decoding a symbol. This chapter will include an examination of how the characters in Troilus and Criseyde read two of the most prominent deities in the poem, Fortune and Cupid, as well as an appraisal of how these characters examine events in their lives for the purpose of evaluating the gods. The characters's interpretation of the gods's major signs (such as dreams, weather, and the movement of heavenly bodies) will be studied in the next chapter. Not all characters in this poem misread the gods as do Troilus, Pandarus, Criseyde and the narrator; Calkas and Cassandra are examples of characters who read the gods accurately. Although both prophets interpret divine signs "correctly," they do not use their knowledge toward the same ends. Calkas uses his knowledge for self-

preservation while Cassandra uses her knowledge for the benefit of her brother and her city, although her attempts are frustrated by skepticism. One source of knowledge that the prophets are familiar with, and that the major characters of Troilus and Criseyde also encounter, is old stories. Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's dream reveals that such stories can provide the major characters with insight if they read and interpret them "correctly." Two old stories play particularly important roles in the poem: the story of Philomela and the story of Thebes. It is clear that although such tales from antiquity should influence and enlighten Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus, as is ironically suggested by the narrator's constant appeal to his invented authority Lollius, these stories are often dismissed by the characters in the poem.

One old story that is frequently alluded to in Troilus and Criseyde, and that develops the poem's ominous undertone, is the story of Philomela, Procne, and Tereus. When Pandarus awakes in Book II on the morning of his appeal to Criseyde, he hears

> The swalowe Proigne, with a sorowful lay,
> Whan morwen com, gan make hire waymentynge
> Whi she forshapen was; and evere lay
> Pandare abedde, half in a slomberynge,
> Til she so neigh hym made hire cheterynge
> How Tereus gan forth hire suster take,
> That with the noyse of hire he gan awake. (II. 64 - 70)

With Pandarus's substantial knowledge of the stories of antiquity, which he displays in his appeal to Troilus in Book I, he should be aware of Procne's story and understand the significance it has for him and his "grete emprise." Chaucer is certainly familiar with this story, for he tells it in The Legend of Good Women (2228 - 2393). In the Legend, Chaucer describes how Philomela comes to visit her sister Procne and is raped by Procne's husband Tereus. Tereus then cuts Philomela's tongue out and imprisons her. Some critics argue that Chaucer alludes to this myth in Troilus and Criseyde to suggest that Pandarus's relationship with Criseyde is incestuous, like Tereus's relationship with

Philomela. Such critics defend their assertion that Pandarus has a sexual relationship with Criseyde by citing a scene following the consummation; in this scene, the narrator says that Pandarus came to Criseyde in bed and "hath fully his entente" (III. 1582). Although it is difficult to accept this theory of a sexual relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde without more explicit evidence, the Philomela myth does provide insight into Pandarus's character in other, less sensational ways. For instance, Chaucer says in the Legend that the myth of Philomela and Tereus is a story of a man who "is in love so fals and so forswore" (2235). This description could also apply to Pandarus, who deceives and lies to Criseyde, the object of his vicarious desire. Pandarus, also like Tereus, manipulates a woman in order to keep her "to his usage and his store" (LGW 2337). We are never told that Pandarus considers the consequences of his actions for Criseyde, or anticipates how her situation may be compromised by having a relationship with Troilus. Laura D. Kellogg vehemently describes how Procne's presence reflects poorly on Pandarus's character and the morality of his plans for Criseyde:

> Procne's role of reminding Pandarus of his "grete emprise" should seem no less than sick. Might the enterprise in which Tereus engages, the rape of his wife's sister Philomela followed by the removal of her tongue, be a portentous sign of the nature of Pandarus' "emprise," his actions towards Criseyde, for instance? (69)

It is not surprising that Pandarus disregards how his actions may harm Criseyde for, as has been previously mentioned, Pandarus also disregards the violence that is a part of his life, including his language. Interestingly, violent language is another similarity between the story of Troilus and Criseyde, and that of Tereus and Philomela.

The violent imagery used to describe Tereus's rape of Philomela in The Legend of Good Women is remarkably similar to the violent imagery used to describe love in Troilus and Criseyde. In the Legend, for instance, the narrator describes the rape of Philomela in terms of a predator attacking his prey:

> Ryght as the lamb that of the wolf is biten;
> Or as the culver tat of the egle is smiten,
> And is out of his clawes forth escaped,
> Yit it is afered and awhaped,
> Lest it be hent eft-sones; so sat she. (LGW 2318-22)

This passage resembles the passage in Troilus and Criseyde in which the narrator compares the consummation to a sparrow hawk that takes a lark in its claw (III. 1191-92). There is, of course, an important difference between the two passages: one describes a rape, and the other describes the union of two consenting adults. This comparison does not reflect well on Troilus and Criseyde, however, whose union should not have as negative connotations as a rape. The affinity between the two stories is strengthened a few lines later in Troilus and Criseyde when the narrator describes Criseyde

> as the newe abaysed nyghtyngale,
> That stynteth first whan she bygynneth to synge,
> Whan that she hereth any herde tale,
> Or in the hegges any wyght stirynge,
> And after siker doth hire vois out rynge,
> Right so Criseyde, whan hire drede stente,
> Opened hire herte and tolde hym hire entente. (III. 1233-39)

Criseyde's description as a startled nightingale alludes, once again, to the story of Philomela. Criseyde is certainly not raped as is Philomela, neither is she a virgin, but she is manipulated by a man who lies to her, as Tereus lies to Philomela and Procne. This allusion also reminds the reader that just as treachery causes the tragedy of the Philomela story, treachery will also cause the two tragedies of Troilus and Criseyde: Criseyde's unfaithfulness and the fall of Troy. Unlike Philomela, however, Criseyde is partly to blame for her tragedy since she makes choices; Criseyde chooses to follow Pandarus and play the courtly love game, and she chooses to deceive, like Tereus and Pandarus.

Criseyde, like Pandarus, does not recognize that the Philomela myth has significance for her. When she first hears the nightingale, the night that Pandarus first solicits her cooperation, she misinterprets its importance:

> A nyghtyngale, upon a cedre grene,
> Under the chambre wal ther as she ley,
> Ful loude song ayein the moone shene,
> Peraunter in his briddes wise a lay
> Of love, that made hire herte fressh and gay.
> That herkned she so longe in good entente,
> Til at the laste the dede slep hire hente. (II. 918-24)

Although this nightingale is referred to as a male bird who sings of love, the reader is still reminded of Philomela's transformation into a female bird who sings of violent and treacherous love. Criseyde does not appreciate the connotations of the nightingale's song, however, and falls asleep with her "herte fressh and gay." John McCall argues that these allusions to the Philomela story, along with references to other bird songs, reflect the "tragic design of action" in the poem:

> As that design was hidden in the narrative, so too are the bird songs of the poem: often couched in classical legend, they sound notes of a tragic evolution. Thus Procne's song of Tereus's raping Philomela (2. 64-70) turns into the attractive love song of the nightingale (Philomela) when Criseyde dreams of love (2. 918-24) and is later filled with love (3. 1233-39). But with Fortune's change we hear "Escaphilo," the owl who bodes death (5. 310-20), and then the lark–Nisus's daughter–who sings of love's treachery (5. 1110). The songs, in other words, come full circle with the narrative. (38)

Part of this "tragic evolution" is the implication that the happiness of the characters at the middle of this process is not as perfect as it seems. Even the narrator, while reveling in his description of "Th'effect and joie of Troilus service," must admit that "ther was som disese among" (III. 1815-16). He also must declare in the first lines of the proem to Book IV "But al to litel, weylaway the whyle, / Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune" (IV. 1-2). Chaucer does not allow the lovers to revel in their sensual pleasures without using techniques such as allusion to old stories to remind the reader that the union of Troilus and Criseyde has negative implications. One such old story consistently reappears in Troilus and Criseyde and is particularly important for the characters in this poem: the

story of Thebes. Unfortunately, because the characters usually disregard this story, they fail to learn the lesson that Thebes has for Troy.

The story of Thebes, as recounted by Criseyde, begins with Oedipus's murder of Laius and ends with mass destruction in the great battle, the Seven Against Thebes. As has been discussed, Criseyde is listening to this story in Book II when Pandarus comes to tell her that Troilus loves her. Pandarus and Criseyde, of course, do not recognize that this story could teach them something about the fate of their own city, and they continue with their talk of love. In fact, the stories of Troy and Thebes have many similarities; they involve "the same long history of confused dealings among humans and between humans and gods, conscious and unconscious breaches of trust and piety, and blindness or willful ignorance in the face of prophecy" (Wetherbee 116). Like the narrator's periodic allusions to Troy's inevitable destruction, the characters's dismissal of the Thebes story serves to remind the reader that the characters are not studying the signs that come to their attention in a sufficiently rigorous manner. While Criseyde admits that she lacks the third eye of Prudence, the one that looks to the future (V. 744 - 49), it is apparent that she, Troilus, and Pandarus also lack the eye that looks to the past, to Thebes. The story of Thebes represents, as McCall says, "the history of old tragedies" in which deception, violence, and selfish government cause great destruction (90). Thebes is the prequel to the destruction that is occurring in Troy. Thus, from the perspective of the narrator and reader, Troy also belongs to that "history of old tragedies." However, the story of Thebes has not only historical significance for the characters of Troilus and Criseyde; it also has personal significance for one of these characters. Cassandra reveals to Troilus that his greatest personal enemy is of Theban ancestry. Thebes bred chaos, violence, and Diomede. "In Chaucer's poem Thebes is as remote as the ancient curse on Oedipus; it is as near as the threat of Diomedes, 'son of Tideus'" (Fleming 47). Unfortunately, Troilus only begins to realize the importance of this story at the end of the poem.

Late in the poem, Troilus appears to recognize that the Thebes story has significance for him. In Book IV, Troilus predicts that his end will be like Oedipus's end: "But ende I wol, as Edippe, in derknesse / My sorwful lif, and dyen in distresse" (IV. 300-301). As John Fleming notes in his book Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus, numerous interpretations have been made of this passage (46). Oedipus's blindness is one provocative similarity between the two characters; Oedipus is literally blind, and Troilus is metaphorically blind:

> Though capable of moments of vision, Troilus is, for the purposes of this comparison, the Oedipus of the Trojan version of the story, moving blindly along the preordained path of his double sorrow in pursuit of a personal goal that is a symptom and a symbol of the fatal blindness of the doomed city of Troy. (Wetherbee 116)

Fleming is less interested in Troilus's blindness, finding more significance in Oedipus's ability to interpret "ambages." He says that "the old king's claim to have the gift of solving ambigua is almost terrifyingly ironic" (48).

In Book V, Troilus sees another connection between his situation and the story of Thebes. In this passage, he asks Cupid to compel Criseyde to return to him;

> Destreyne hire herte as faste to retorne
> As thow doost myn to longen hire to see;
> Than woot I wel that she nyl naught sojorne.
> Now blisful lord, so cruel thow ne be
> Unto the blood of Troie, I preye the,
> As Juno was unto the blood Thebane,
> For which the folk of Thebes caughte hire bane. (V. 596-602)

Unfortunately, Troilus merely sees the story of Thebes as evidence that the gods should change their behavior; he asks Cupid to act differently to Troy than Juno did to Thebes. Troilus implies that Troy's problem is the difficulty that he is having with his love life, thus equating his adversity in love with the destruction of Thebes. Because his obligation to Troy has only secondary significance in his life, Troilus does not associate the story of

Thebes with his own responsibility as a ruler–a mistake that Chaucer hopes for his noble audience to avoid by Troilus's example. This story could help Troilus learn from the mistakes of the Theban royalty and not put his personal desires before the safety of his city. The story of Thebes could also help him see that Troy is in danger of experiencing a catastrophe far worse than his separation from Criseyde. Unfortunately, in the poem, the prophets are the only characters in this poem who are able to predict the oncoming tragedy.

There are numerous other old stories alluded to in Troilus and Criseyde. We have already seen that Pandarus, in particular, uses his knowledge of such stories to achieve the union of Troilus and Criseyde. Like Pandarus, Calkas and Cassandra also make use of authoritative evidence like old stories. Unlike the main characters, however, these prophets accurately interpret signs from the gods and see the true significance of old stories. Calkas is the prophet that first appears in Troilus and Criseyde. In the opening lines, the narrator introduces the reader to

> . . . a lord of gret auctorite,
> A gret devyn, that clepid was Calkas,
> That in science so expert was that he
> Knew wel that Troie sholde destroied be,
> By answere of his god, that highte thus:
> Daun Phebus or Appollo Delphicus. (I. 65-70)

Calkas is characterized as a man of knowledge–a man who can "correctly" interpret divine signs. The narrator informs the reader that Calkas interprets two signs "correctly." He understands the meaning of the stars and of the Delphic oracle: "this Calkas knew by calkulynge, / And ek by answer of this Appollo" (I. 71-72). Calkas "successfully" interprets signs because he accepts their difficult significations. He sees evidence of Troy's destruction and acts on that knowledge.

Unfortunately, although Calkas "correctly" interprets divine signs, he does not use his knowledge responsibly. Upon learning of Troy's destruction, Calkas deserts his city to join the Greeks:

> For which to departen softely
> Took purpos ful this forknowynge wise,
> And to the Grekes oost ful pryvely
> He stal anon. . . . (I. 78-81)

Calkas is condemned in this poem for selfishly exploiting his knowledge. Calkas works for his own profit when he should be working for common profit. Chaucer dramatizes the importance of common profit in The Parliament of Fowls and it can also be seen as one of the themes of The Canterbury Tales. In The Parliament of Fowls, the dreamer reads the Dream of Scipio in which Scipio prays to know what is "The wey to come into that hevene blisse." Scipio is told to ". . . werche and wysse / To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse" (74-75). This message is meant for all members of society, but particularly for those who are charged with ruling over and protecting the society. As a prophet, one of Calkas's social obligations is to advise the rulers who protect his society. Appropriately, the condemnation of Calkas's selfishness is voiced primarily by the Trojan people, those who are harmed by his desertion. The Trojans are so angry at the "traitour" Calkas and his abandonment of Troy that they want to wreak revenge on Calkas's family (i.e., Criseyde):

> . . . [the Trojans] casten to be wroken
> On hym that falsly hadde his feith so broken,
> And seyden he and al his kyn at-ones
> Ben worthi for to brennen, fel and bones. (I. 88-91)

The story of Calkas's treachery inspires the reader to feel anger for Calkas and pity for Criseyde, who is in danger, unaware of her father's "false and wikked dede" (I. 93). Calkas's selfishness characterizes him as, as Troilus says, an "oold, unholsom, and myslyved man" (IV. 330). Chaucer clearly chooses to characterize Calkas negatively in

order to support his argument that the "correct" use of knowledge is as important as the "correct" interpretation of signs.

A. J. Minnis tells us that Calkas's departure is not represented as criminal in all versions of the Troy story. Minnis describes how Calkas comes to desert Troy according to Guido's Historia Destructionis Troiae:

> Having travelled to the island of Delos to consult Apollo, Calchas receives this answer: "Calchas, Calchas, beware of returning to your country, but go at once in safety to the Greek fleet. . . . For, by the will of the gods, it is to be that the Greeks will obtain the victory against the Trojans. You and your counsel and learning will be very necessary to these Greeks until they obtain the aforesaid victory." (78-79)

According to this version of the story, Calkas joins the Greeks because his god bids him to do so; his motives are not selfish. As Minnis says, "it is apparent that his efforts to further the Greek cause are attributable to pagan piety and devotion" (78). Chaucer could certainly have decided to characterize Calkas in a similar, non-critical way. Like Boccaccio, however, Chaucer chooses to represent Calkas as a selfish, cowardly deserter– a man who fails to use his knowledge for the greatest good.

In Troilus and Criseyde, the pursuit of knowledge is certainly represented positively– when the knowledge is used properly. Chaucer clearly asserts that Calkas should have used his knowledge for the good of his own city, not the Greeks. Calkas also should not have put his own survival above the survival of Troy. Even Criseyde is aware of her father's selfishness; she describes him as "ful of coveytise" (IV. 1369). She sees Calkas's greed, which Chaucer represents as a stereotypical characteristic of old men in The Canterbury Tales, as a weakness that leaves him open to manipulation:

> So what for o thynge and for other, swete,
> I shal hym so enchaunten with my sawes
> That right in hevene his sowle is, shal he mete;
> For al Appollo, or his clerkes lawes,

> Or calkulynge, avayleth nought thre hawes;
> Desir of gold shal so his soule blende
> That, as me lyst, I shal wel make an ende. (IV. 1394-1400)

Criseyde suggests that Calkas's science and faith are both weaker than his greed. According to Criseyde's description, Calkas does not have the strength of character to use his knowledge responsibly. Indeed, Calkas's behavior in the Greek camp supports Criseyde's conviction.

Calkas appears to continue to exploit his knowledge after he enters the Greek camp. There is some evidence that Calkas misrepresents the depth of his knowledge to the Greeks for his own benefit. In Book I, the narrator mentions that when Calkas deserts to the Greeks, they

> Hym diden bothe worship and servyce,
> In trust that he hath konnynge hem to rede
> In every peril which that is to drede. (I. 82-84)

Unlike Guido, Chaucer gives the reader no indication that Calkas can help the Greeks in their war effort–he merely knows that they will win. Thus, Calkas may be pretending to more knowledge than he truly has. Later in the poem, the insinuation that Calkas is misrepresenting himself to the Greeks is strengthened when Diomede suggests that Calkas may be using ambiguous words to manipulate the Greeks:

> And but if Calkas lede us with ambages–
> That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
> Swiche as men clepen a word with two visages–
> Ye shal wel knowen that I naught ne lie. . . . (V. 897-900)

According to Minnis, Chaucer suggests that Calkas uses his knowledge irresponsibly in order to condemn Calkas's pagan faith. Minnis says that Chaucer depicts "Calkas exploit[ing] his powers in a selfish and sordid way," to imply that "we, as (nominally) superior Christian readers, should condemn him" (82). Calkas is certainly an example of a "bad" pagan. Minnis's assertion is weakened, however, because the poem also contains

examples of "good" pagans. Calkas's actions most convincingly illustrate that using knowledge appropriately is a moral responsibility, as is "correctly" interpreting signs. The actions of another prophet, Cassandra, also serve to illustrate this point.

Cassandra is another prophet who "correctly" interprets messages from the gods. Cassandra is an unusual character in this poem, for she is one of the only characters who, as Pulisano says, "stand[s] at the threshold of truth" (154). She is wise partly because she knows that old stories are an important source of knowledge. She tells Troilus that if he wishes to know the truth about his dream, he "most a fewe of olde stories heere" (V. 1459). She goes on to tell Troilus the story that he has needed to hear, the story of Thebes. Because of her knowledge of old stories, Cassandra is finally able, as Vance says, to bring "the repressed moral significance of the story of Thebes" to the surface (286). Cassandra is also wise because she, unlike Calkas, uses her knowledge charitably.

In Cassandra's conversation with Troilus, it is clear that she does not use her knowledge solely for personal gain. She tells Troilus about his dream in the hope of helping him and imparting to him ". . . how that Fortune overthrowe / Hath lordes olde . . ." (V. 1460-61). Not only is Cassandra frank, accurate, and unflinching in her prophesy, but she also has the depth of vision to see the larger picture of Troy's fate. Unfortunately, because Cassandra's description of the historic context of Troilus's tragedy does not match his personal vision of reality, he does what Pulisano argues is his typical response to truth in Troilus and Criseyde, he "[rejects the truth] in favor of maintaining an illusion of subjective truth" (154). Troilus also rejects Cassandra's words because he believes that her motives are malicious; clearly Troilus fails to assume that Cassandra speaks out of "good will." If Troilus had listened to Cassandra and believed what she was telling him about Thebes and Fortune, he might have gained insight into his own self-destructive

behavior. She also could have taught him that many great people, like him, fall because they trust in Fortune.

Fortune plays a prominent role in Troilus and Criseyde. Indeed, her role is substantial enough to remind the reader of a de casibus work, a story about an extraordinary person who falls from greatness due to Fortune's influence. Although the association between Troilus and Criseyde and de casibus literature is widely accepted by critics, it is not undisputed. Monica McAlpine, for instance, claims that Chaucer "rejected the [de casibus genre] as an adequate conception of tragedy" (29). Certainly, Troilus and Criseyde does not share all of the distinguishing characteristics of the de casibus genre. However, Troilus and Criseyde and de casibus poems have some similarities; for instance, they share an emphasis on Fortune's power and influence. The major characters of Troilus and Criseyde clearly have some knowledge of Fortune and her ways through Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy. Unfortunately, although the narrator, Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus know that Fortune is unstable and often the dispenser of cruel fate, they do not act on that knowledge by trying to escape Fortune. Unlike Boethius, these characters do not realize that Fortune can not cause them harm if they do not place value in earthly goods. Although they periodically have flashes of insight into the relationship between Fortune and providence, the characters of Troilus and Criseyde generally misread this most fickle goddess.

For most of the poem, the narrator is as much on Fortune's wheel as are the other characters in the story. Donald Rowe is correct when he says that the narrator "seems nearly as reluctant as Troilus to see the truth, the light of day, and nearly as hurt by his discovery of the world's frailty" (163). The narrator is thoroughly involved with the events of the story, rejoicing in the pleasure of the union of Troilus and Criseyde and mourning the obstacles in the path of their relationship. Throughout the poem, the

narrator holds Fortune accountable for many incidental occurrences in the story–both good and bad. He takes the bad occurrences personally because, in a sense, the narrator is as affected by the path of Troilus and Criseyde's lives as are they; his story must follow the same direction as do their lives. The narrator's awareness of his characters's ultimate tragedy causes him frustration and pain. Even the joy of Book III, in which the narrator takes such pleasure, is tainted because he is aware that the joy, as well as the pain, is dependent on Fortune's spinning wheel:

> Soon after this, for that Fortune it wolde,
> Icomen was the blisful tyme swete. (III. 1667-8)

The narrator's qualifying remark, "for that Fortune it wolde," deflates his own description of Troilus and Criseyde's joy and draws the reader's attention forward to the final, more intense sorrow that is to come.

Interestingly, the narrator's condemnation of Fortune does not prove that she has ultimate control over human lives in Troilus and Criseyde. Rather, Chaucer regularly communicates a sense of God's power over the pagan deities. In Book I, for instance, the narrator asks happy lovers to pray to God "So graunte hem soone owt of this world to pace, / That ben despeired out of Loves grace" (41-42). For Chaucer, pagan gods like Cupid may cause human beings to experience misery on earth, but these gods are subject to the Christian God's will. God can even bring the unhappy lovers out of the world in which Cupid seems to have power. In fact, Chaucer suggests that gods such as Cupid and Fortune have no autonomous power; God uses their influence for his own purposes. The narrator displays some understanding of Fortune's subservience to a greater deity in a passage from Book III:

> But O Fortune, executrice of wierdes,
> O influences of thise hevenes hye!
> Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,
> Though to us bestes ben the causez wrie.
> This mene I now: for she gan homward hye,

> But execut was al disyde hire leve
> The goddes wil, for which she moste bleve. (III. 617-23)

On one level, the narrator cites Fortune and the gods's responsibility for earthly events as an excuse for Criseyde. As is his habit, the narrator attempts to free Criseyde from blame. The narrator, however, also clarifies Fortune's role in this poem. Instead of claiming that Fortune merely has random control over human affairs, the narrator argues that Fortune's actions are only apparently random–in fact, she follows God's direction. Her will is subordinate to the will of God. Troilus and Criseyde's tragedy occurs because it is part of God's providence.

The narrator's painful awareness of Troilus and Criseyde's tragic fate causes him to soon forget his initial understanding that Fortune's justice is a function of divine providence. In the course of telling the story, the narrator begins to resent the presence of Fortune in the story, even attributing malevolent motivations to her changability. In the Proem to Book IV, the narrator describes Fortune as laughing when a person falls from her wheel:

> And whan a wight is from hire whiel ythrowe,
> Than laugheth she, and maketh hym the mowe. (IV. 6-7)

He goes on to describe Troilus as that "wight" whom Fortune shuns:

> From Troilus she gan hire brighte face
> Awey to writhe and tok of hym non heede,
> But caste hym clene out of his lady grace,
> And on hire whiel she sette up Diomede. (IV. 8-11)

Later, in Book V, the narrator characterizes Fortune as deliberately deluding Troilus:

> But, weylaway, al this nat but a maze.
> Fortune his howve entended bet to glaze! (V. 468-69)

Indeed, Troilus is deceived about Fortune; but if we are to believe Boethius, Troilus's fate is not caused by Fortune's malevolence. Boethius teaches that Fortune does not deliberately bring anyone good or bad fortune; she distributes good and bad fortune arbitrarily. Interestingly, in his poetry, Chaucer implies that there is one exception to

Fortune's rule of indiscriminateness. Chaucer often suggests, in works such as The Monk's Tale, that the proud are most likely to fall off of Fortune's wheel. In such cases, Fortune punishes the sinful on God's behalf. However, most people, like Troilus, are harmed by Fortune because they put themselves under her power.

Although the narrator implies that Troilus is being cruelly used by the gods and the dispenser of divine justice, Fortune, Troilus is not, nor are the other characters in the poem, a dumb figure that performs predetermined actions. The characters in this poem make choices that have definite consequences. C. David Benson notes that both Troilus and Criseyde decide to love: "Troilus deliberately decides to love Criseyde ('Thus took he purpose loves craft to suwe,' I. 379), and she debates about the merits of loving him in a long inner soliloquy" (Chaucer's Troilus 156). The narrator is not comforted by the knowledge that the characters make choices, however, for he continues to struggle with Fortune's destructive influence. He does, however, mention Fortune's role in the workings of divine providence once more near the end of the poem:

> Fortune, which that permutacioun
> Of thynges hath, as it is hire comitted
> Thorugh purveyaunce and disposicioun
> Of heighte Jove, as rehnes shal be flitted
> Fro folk in folk, or when they shal be smytted,
> Gan pulle awey the fetheres brighte of Troie
> Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie. (V. 1541-47)

Although the narrator admits that Fortune is involved with "purveyaunce and disposicioun," he also only describes this providence as involving negative effects. He says that Fortune decides when the "rehnes" are transferred from one person to another, and when people are "smytted." The narrator's statement implies a heavy condemnation of Fortune, despite his apparent understanding of her justice. It soon becomes clear that the narrator has not overcome his resentment of Fortune. Indeed, the weight of the tragedy in the final lines of the poem provokes the narrator again to condemn Fortune. He

says that despite the great "sorwe and pleynte" of Troilus, "forth hire course Fortune ay gan to holde," thus characterizing Fortune as a stubborn, uncompassionate individual (V. 1744-45). At this point, the narrator is unable to come up with an answer to the difficulty of earthly events other than:

> Swich is this world, whoso it kan byholde;
> In ech estat is litel hertes reste.
> God leve us for to take it for the beste! (V. 1748-50)

The narrator's conclusion resembles Theseus's unsatisfactory response to the tragic death of Arcite at the end of The Knight's Tale. In his "Firste Moevere" speech, Theseus says that, since no one can escape the will of the gods, there is no use in complaining. By the end of Troilus and Criseyde, however, the narrator's complaints against Fortune more resemble Boethius's arguments against the unjust distribution of earthly goods in The Consolation of Philosophy. Bernard Huppé discusses the similarity between Troilus and Criseyde and Boethius's Consolation, claiming that

> what Boethius does here in miniature Chaucer does on the large canvas of the Fall of Troy. In the Troilus, as the narrator becomes involved with his characters so does the reader, but the deeper this involvement the greater the shock of recognition when Troilus laughs at his own funeral observances. It is toward the condemnation and affirmation which follow this laughter of the dead that this poem has been moving as its "fyn." (194)

Both the narrator and Boethius go through a similar process of denouncing the instability of earthly happiness before coming to the conclusion that the only solution is to renounce Fortune and the "worldly vanyte" of her realm (V. 1837). Unfortunately, although they all display some understanding of Fortune's ways, neither Criseyde, nor Pandarus, nor Troilus come to this conclusion in the course of the poem.

Pandarus demonstrates some comprehension of Fortune and her justice. We have already seen that he takes on Lady Philosophy's voice when advising Troilus that Fortune is not to be trusted since it is her nature to be arbitrary. He later gives similar advice to Troilus, telling him not expect anything from Fortune, since she grants favors to no one: "Ne trust

no wight to fynden in Fortune / Ay propretee; hire yiftes ben comune" (IV. 391-92). We have also seen how Criseyde complains of the pain caused by Fortune's instability. However, neither Pandarus nor Criseyde has as intimate a relationship with Fortune as does Troilus. Like the hero of a de casibus work, Troilus falls from his position of power and prosperity because of his pride and the influence of Fortune. In The Monk's Tale, the Monk describes men who, like Troilus, fell from their position of greatness because of their pride and their ignorance of Fortune's ways: "For whan men trusteth [Fortune], thanne wol she faille, / And covere hire brighte face with a clowde" (MkT 2765-66). Troilus's life certainly supports the Monk's assertion; Troilus falls because he foolishly trusts in Fortune.

Troilus's first comment about Fortune introduces some of his most common complaints against the goddess.

> For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo;
> Ne al the men that riden konne or go
> May of hire cruel whiel the harm withstonde;
> For as hire list she pleyeth with free and bonde. (Tr I. 837-40)

Troilus complains of Fortune's destructive abilities, and of her animosity toward him. These two grievances against what Benson calls "hostile destiny" appear repeatedly in Troilus's words, especially in Book IV when Troilus begins to fall from Fortune's wheel (Chaucer's Troilus 162). When his circumstances become adverse, Troilus attempts to "read" Fortune more than ever before. Benson argues that in these last two books, Fortune is also transformed: "Instead of a metaphor for the inevitable ups and downs of life . . . the goddess now represents the inexorable doom of fate–a threatening power indifferent to justice or human suffering" (163-64). Troilus certainly perceives Fortune in the way that Benson describes. Troilus reads Fortune in this way because he does not understand Fortune or her impartiality. In the midst of his weeping over Criseyde's forthcoming departure, Troilus speaks to Fortune, asking her

> What have I don? What have I thus agylt?
> How myghtestow for rowthe me bygile?
> Is ther no grace, and shal I thus be spilt?
> Shal thus Creiseyde awey, for that thow wilt?
> Allas, how maistow in thyn herte fynde
> To ben to me thus cruwel and unkynde? (IV. 261-66)

Like the narrator, Troilus considers his bad fortune as evidence that Fortune is being deliberately cruel to him. Troilus thus assumes that he must have done something to anger the goddess. He protests Fortune's harsh treatment of him, claiming that he has served Fortune faithfully:

> Have I the nought honoured al my lyve,
> As thow wel woost, above the goddes alle?
> Whi wiltow me fro joie thus deprive? (IV. 267-69)

In his own words, Troilus reveals the reason for his unhappiness. Troilus has been faithful to the wrong deity. He is one of the "fooles" that the narrator says are snared by Fortune. It is futile to ask for Fortune's mercy, for, as Benson says, "Despite frequent personifications of Fortune, Troilus never shows her to have anything like the consciousness or heart that Troilus here attributes to her" (Chaucer's Troilus 166). Fortune is a neutral dispenser of divine providence. Her gifts are, as Pandarus says, "comune" (IV. 392). D. W. Robertson Jr. summarizes Boethius's vision of Fortune as reflected in Troilus and Criseyde: "Fortune is, as Boethius explains, no menace to the virtuous, but only to those who subject themselves to it by setting their hearts on a mutable rather than an immutable good" (69). Troilus is such an individual that sets his heart on a mutable good, for his only goal is earthly love–the love of Criseyde. Unfortunately, Criseyde is just as unreliable as is Fortune.

Not only is Criseyde the cause of the earthly love which places Troilus under Fortune's power, but she is also often associated with Fortune in the poem. Thus, Troilus can also be said to serve Fortune by serving Criseyde. Eugene Vance tells us that "Criseyde [is

not] shielded from being identified by us with the larger designs of Fortune, the strumpet-goddess of whom she is the unwitting agent" (297). He later says, more specifically, that Criseyde

> is Fortune's agent on earth, and because Criseyde is "slyndinge of corage" [V.825], she will allow the wheel of history to turn without resistance: "Bothe Troilus and Troie town / Shal knotteles throughout hire herte slide" [V.768-69]. (301)

For Vance, an essential part of Criseyde's similarity with Fortune is their mutual forgetfulness: "Fortune and Criseyde are both figures who promulgate the principle of forgetting: one at the level of empires, the other at the level of individuals" (304). Charles Berryman also sees a resemblance between Criseyde and Fortune, even claiming that the two are often indistinguishable. He argues that when the narrator says that "on hir wheel she sette up Diomede" (IV. 11), Criseyde and Fortune are "synonymous" (Berryman 5). Criseyde is indeed related with symbols of instability throughout the poem. Criseyde is associated with the moon, for instance, which McCall says is the "traditional figure of fickle Fortune" (35). For instance, Criseyde swears by Cynthia, the emblem of fickleness (35), that she will be faithful:

> Now for the love of Cinthia the sheene,
> Mistrust me nought thus causeles, for routhe,
> Syn to be trewe I have yow plight my trouthe. (IV. 1608-10)

Moreover, when Criseyde leaves Troy, Troilus uses the moon to measure the time until she will return. As McCall says, however, in addition to be a "means of measuring the ten days between Criseyde's departure and her supposed return," the references to the moon are also "a means of picturing Fortune's treachery" (35). The moon is, of course, an appropriate audience to Troilus's complaint when Criseyde is gone:

> And every nyght, as was his wone to doone,
> He stood the brighte moone to byholde,
> And al his sorwe he to the moone tolde,
> And seyde, "Ywis, whan thow art horned newe,
> I shal be glad, if al the world be trewe!" (Tr V. 647-51)

The irony of Troilus's misinterpretation is clear. He trusts three women, Latona, Fortune and Criseyde, despite the fact that there is evidence of their inconstancy. As for the goddesses Latona and Fortune, old stories prove their fickleness. Criseyde's association with these goddesses should warn Troilus that she will not return. He misreads Criseyde, the moon and Fortune, however, failing to recognize their common qualities. One of the primary reasons for Troilus's misinterpretation of Fortune is his inability to accept Fortune's part in divine providence.

Troilus "reads" Fortune in two ways. In many of his complaints, Troilus sees Fortune as the distributor of earthly goods–she is responsible for whether or not Troilus gets what he wants. He also, as we have seen in his Boethian speech, acknowledges the workings of divine providence. When providence is taken into account, Fortune's role can be seen differently. She is no longer solely responsible for earthly events. Rather, she works for a higher power; she enacts the divine will. As Gordon says, "all fortune is good, since it is Providence at the hub who turns Fortune's wheel" (41). While Troilus admits to the reality of predestination, he does not see the connection between providence and his earthly fortunes. Troilus makes a mistake of interpretation, for he fails to understand that the reality of providence denies the possibility of Fortune's anger and malevolence–as well as the benefit of serving her. By holding Fortune responsible for his personal disasters, Troilus escapes responsibility himself. He also escapes responsibility by claiming that predestination denies the possibility of free will. Troilus's misinterpretations reveal his lack of philosophical comprehension and his tendency toward willful misunderstanding: he cites Boethius and yet stops reading before Lady Philosophy explains that predestination and free will are not mutually exclusive. Similarly, he discusses predestination and earthly fortunes and yet never ceases to mourn the gods's unjust treatment of him. As Steadman says, Troilus's "misinterpretation of Boethian doctrine . . . . [and] his failure to pursue the argument to its conclusion

underscore his mortal ignorance; they emphasize his limited knowledge rather than his philosophical insight" (76). These failings do not just underscore his ignorance, however, they also underscore his reluctance to grapple with the "truth" and realize that he "hopes and fears, feels joy or sorrow for goods that are by nature mutable and transitory" and thus false (68). Troilus is similarly reluctant to see the "truth" about another unreliable god to whom he dedicates himself: Cupid, the god of earthly love.

The god of love, Cupid, is also "read" by the characters of Troilus and Criseyde. They try to decipher why and how Cupid influences human beings. They also often characterize the god of love in different ways: as vengeful, as a source of virtue, and by allusion to the other God of Love, the Christian God. McCall describes the conventional conceptions of Cupid which were around even before Chaucer's time:

> Cupid is blind, and so irrational; winged, and so light and fickle; boyish because he is so foolishly immature, or lordly because of his power over mankind. He bears the gold-tipped arrows of keen desire (through the eyes), or he bears the torch of fiery passion; he is a metaphor for a force within man's fallen nature–the instinctive desire to have an possess whatever is attractive–a force which Petrarch says is made a god by only vain and foolish men. (27)

At the beginning of the poem, Troilus has a strong sense of the negative consequences of serving Cupid. He calls lovers, people under the influence of Cupid, "fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!" (I. 202). Apparently, the narrator also has a sense of Cupid's negative qualities, for he characterizes Cupid as a vindictive god who punishes Troilus for his remark.

The narrator has an ambivalent attitude toward Cupid. Initially, the narrator describes the god of love as a vengeful god who is easily offended. When Troilus, in passing, makes scornful comments about lovers, Cupid ". . . loken rowe / Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken" (I. 207-7). The narrator does not, however, hold Cupid solely responsible for

Troilus's punishment. He also blames Troilus, whose pride has caused him to be "subgit unto love" (I. 231). The narrator encourages his audience to

> Forthy ensample taketh of this man,
>
> . . . .
>
> To scornen Love, which that so soone kan
> The fredom of youre hertes to hym thralle;
> For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle,
> That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,
> For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde. (I. 232-38)

The narrator advises treating Cupid with respect not because he deserves it, or for any religious reason. Rather, the narrator warns against scorning Love because he is so powerful and causes his "folk" to endure "peyne and wo" (I. 34). Neither the "strengest folk" nor the "worthiest and grettest of degree" have any defense against Cupid's power (I. 244). The narrator concludes that the only solution is to succumb to Cupid's influence, adding as an afterthought that love is a commendable thing:

> Now sith it may nat goodly ben withstonde,
> And is a thing so vertuous in kynde,
> Refuseth nat to Love for to ben bonde. (I. 253-55)

The narrator speaks more convincingly in favor of love in the Proem to Book III where he says that

> God loveth, and to love wol nought werne,
> And in this world no lyves creature
> Withouten love is worth, or may endure. (III. 12-14)

This passage, however, is part of the narrator's invocation of Venus, not Cupid. If this passage is taken at face value, the narrator seems to be saying that Venus is the source of positive love. However, in the two subsequent stanzas, the narrator describes how Venus has made fools of Jove and Mars. Venus made Jove "amorous" and "in a thousand formes down hym sente / For love in erthe" (17, 20). Similarly, Venus "fierse Mars apaisen of his ire" (22). When these passages are also considered, the characterization of Venus as an all-loving, unifying influence is clearly ironic. It is also important to recall Chaucer's characterization of Venus in his other works. As previously mentioned, there are three

temples of Venus described in Chaucer's works, all similar in their negative implications. In The Parliament of Fowls, Venus is contrasted with Nature. While Nature is the source of beneficial, procreative love, Venus is the source of passionate, self-destructive love. Her temple is even decorated with depictions of this violent love: "Alle these were peynted on that other syde, / And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde" (293 - 94). In order to discover the true source of beneficial, positive love that Chaucer refers to in the Prologue to Book III of Troilus and Criseyde, one must look to a work that inspired Chaucer's passage. Despite Fleming's objection (69 note), the critical consensus is that this passage is based on Boethius's description of the love that rules the universe and holds together the Great Chain of Being (II m.8). For Chaucer, as for Boethius, love that is in harmony with God is positive, unifying and virtuous love, whereas cupidinous love is painful and chaotic. Troilus, of course, is the character who is most closely associated with Cupid and who most strongly feels this god's painful influence.

Troilus spends much of his time trying to understand and react to Cupid. Cupid, in fact, is the god that Troilus invokes the most. Criseyde recognizes Troilus's dedication to Cupid when she calls Troilus "Cupides sone" (V. 1590). Troilus first dedicates his life to Cupid when he is stricken by Cupid's arrow; ". . . O lord, now youres is / My spirit, which that oughte youres be" (I. 422-23). The majority of Troilus's speeches about Cupid are in the form of complaints. He continually begs Cupid to have pity on him and to grant him his lady's grace. In Book III, however, after the consummation scene, Troilus sings a song of praise to Cupid in which he says that Cupid, Love, is the source of earthly stability. Like the Prologue to Book III, however (and, again, despite Fleming's objection), this song is taken from Boethius 2 m. 8 in which Lady Philosophy sings a song praising the power of love that binds the world together. Unlike Troilus, Lady Philosophy is singing about another God of Love, the Christian God. This is one of many instances, beginning in the Prologue to Book I, when Cupid is contrasted with the Christian God. As we will see,

when Chaucer describes or refers to Cupid, he often uses imagery and language that alludes to the Christian God in order to accomplish a comparison between the two deities. These comparisons put the pagan religion depicted in the poem in perspective for Chaucer's medieval Christian audience. The audience is reminded that, despite the praise bestowed on pagan gods and goddesses by the characters in the poem, these deities are not the Christian God; they do not share his power or mercy, nor do they rule the world in as just and loving a manner. In Boethian terms, Cupid is the source of false happiness, whereas God is the source of permanent happiness.

In the comparison between Cupid and the Christian God found in Book III after the consummation, Cupid is lowered in the audience's estimation. Ida Gordon's Boethian reading explains Troilus's mistake: "To give this hymn to Troilus is to reveal how misdirected is his love, since the very terms of the hymn make clear that the 'holy bond of love' must exclude a love that had become an end in itself" (36). Troilus makes this mistake in part because he is unable "to distinguish between cupidinous love and charitable love" (37). In this poem, Cupid is not the source of earthly stability as Troilus claims; rather, the narrator suggests that Cupid causes injury and disaster. The Christian God, however, is described as a just and faithful God; he is the God who "nyl falsen no wight . . . / That wol his herte al holly on hym leve" (V. 1845-46). Again, the same cannot be said of Cupid, who allows the destruction of his dedicated servant Troilus and who, from the beginning of the poem, is described as the causer of woe and pain. In his time of joy, Troilus fails to see that "The happiness that the false goods bring . . . can only be a deceptive and mutable happiness: true and permanent happiness can only come by participation in the whole and perfect good that is in God" (Gordon 28). Troilus, however, echoes Lady Philosophy without fully understanding the connotations of her words and thanks Cupid for granting him his wish without recognizing that Cupid, like Fortune, is inconsistent and unreliable.

Just as Troilus fails to understand Cupid in his time of joy, he is surprised in Book V when his fortunes in love turn bad. He assumes that Cupid wants to destroy him:

> . . . O blisful lord Cupide,
> Whan I the proces have in my memorie
> How thow me hast wereyed on every syde,
> Men myght a book make of it, lik a storie.
> What nede is the to seke on me victorie,
> Syn I am thyn and holly at thi wille?
> What joie hastow thyn owen folk to spille? (V. 582-88)

Cupid is ultimately inscrutable to Troilus in this poem. He can never understand why Cupid makes him happy or unhappy in love. He makes some very simple assumptions; if he is happy in love he assumes that he is in Cupid's favor and if he is unhappy in love he assumes that Cupid is angry with him. Troilus can never see beyond his present state to put Cupid's actions into perspective and form a coherent vision of this god. Troilus forgets from moment to moment what Cupid has done in the past and thus he never sees the tragic movement of his life.

Troilus's confusion about Cupid's motivations do not prevent him from entirely dedicating himself to this god. Benson says that "the extent to which Troilus's devotion leads him to reject all other values (I. 463-8) is sometimes not sufficiently acknowledged" (Chaucer's Troilus 99). Benson goes on to reject the theories of critics who claim that Troilus does not try to stop the parliament from exchanging Criseyde to the Greeks because of his concern for Troy. Benson says that Troilus "cares nothing for king, family, fellow-citizens, law, or knightly reputation–only for his beloved" (100). Thus, Troilus does not prevent Criseyde's exchange because of "the injury it might do to her good name" (100). Benson's argument is sound and well supported in the text–we have already seen how Troilus's love causes him to lose all interest in his civic responsibilities. In a prayer to Cupid, Troilus even states that he gives up his "estat roial . . . . / Into hire hond"

(I. 432-33). Troilus's surrender of his social responsibilities reflects poorly on his master, Cupid. Chaucer also encourages criticism of Cupid by using quasi-Christian phrases to describe earthly love. By including such phrases, Chaucer makes the Christian God a character in this "pagan" poem and confirms God's dominance over Cupid.

The characters of Troilus and Criseyde often use religious allusions to describe and express love. While, on one level, Chaucer includes these descriptions of love as expressions familiar to his audience, on another level, he includes them to strengthen the comparison between Cupid and the Christian God and question Cupid's precedence. A brief but characteristic part of the narrator's description of the love affair is his description of Criseyde's beauty. The narrator introduces her as having such "aungelik" beauty that she seemed like a "hevenyssh perfit creature" (I. 102, 104). Appropriately, the love that Criseyde's heavenly beauty helps inspire is also associated with heaven. When Criseyde asks Antigone if love is as blissful as her song describes, Antigone answers that "Men moste axe at seyntes if it is / Aught fair in hevene . . ." (II. 894-95). Pandarus also uses heaven imagery to describe earthly love. He encourages Troilus before the consummation scene, telling him that if he is successful, "thow shalt into hevene blisse wende" (III. 704). Pandarus is correct, for when Troilus is finally united with Criseyde, "in this hevene he gan hym to delite" (III. 1251). He also tells Criseyde that "Thow hast in hevene ybrought my soule at reste" (1599). Similarly, the narrator and Pandarus both refer to the consummation as "hevene blisse" (1322, 1657). Finally, when Criseyde is about to leave for the Greek camp, she thinks how ". . . fro heven into which helle / She fallen was. . ." (IV. 712-13). Chaucer's medieval Christian audience would certainly insist that this earthly bliss is not the true heaven, and would believe that no love affair could resemble the paradise of dwelling with God. Troilus and Criseyde experience a temporary happiness, happiness that does not reflect the true happiness of God and which, unfortunately, is subject to the whims of Cupid and Fortune.

Phrases that allude to Christian concepts, similar to the ones just discussed, are also used to describe Cupid. C. David Benson describes how "the narrator describes himself, in words modelled on a papal title ('servant of the servants of God'), as one who 'God of Loves servantz serve' (I. 15)" (Chaucer's Troilus 180). The narrator thus describes his relationship to Cupid as a pope to the god of love. This phrase reminds the reader that Cupid is no more the true, supremely loving God of Love than the narrator is the true pope. Also, in the Prologue to Book I, the narrator summarizes Troilus's ascent to heaven: "Love hem brynge in hevene to solas" (31). Although "Love," here, may refer to Cupid bringing lovers earthly pleasure, Chaucer's audience would have also thought of the other God of Love who, if they serve him well, will one day bring them "in hevene to solas" and rescue them from earthly pain and instability, including the pain caused by Cupid. There are also several references in the poem to repentance. The narrator tells us that Troilus leaves the temple where he fell in love "repentynge hym that he hadde evere ijaped / Of Loves folk" (I. 319-20). Pandarus also encourages Troilus to tell the God of Love "Thy grace, lord, for now I me repente" (933). Troilus again repents of scorning lovers when he prays to the god of Love, saying "Now, mea culpa, lord, I me repente!" (II. 525). C. David Benson notes that Troilus also seems to go through "a form of the three stages of Catholic penance: contrition (II. 525), confession (II. 528) and satisfaction (II. 529)" (Chaucer's Troilus 181).

The comparison between Cupid and the Christian God is largely established through the consistent usage of short phrases that are commonly used to refer to the Christian God. These phrases include: "love of God," "God me (us) blesse," "grace of God," "almyghty God," "God spede," and "God so my soule save." Because C. David Benson gives all of these references in his book, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, there is no need to repeat them all here. However, these expressions do warrant a few comments in order to place

them within the argument of this study. First of all, it is clear that some of these phrases are certainly trivial oaths, made in passing, that are not meant to provoke intense scrutiny. However, others are, as T. P. Dunning says, oaths "which are manifestly in earnest and reflect belief in a Creator and in His government of the universe" (169). Thus, on one level, the sum effect of these phrases is to remind the reader that the Christian God is always present and in control, even in this "pagan" world. By reminding the reader of the divine hierarchy in the poem, Chaucer's subtle criticism of pagan values is more effective; when earthly love is compared to divine love, the reader is reminded of the inferiority of earthly love, and when Cupid is compared to the Christian God, the reader realizes that Cupid lacks the grace, mercy and power of the Christian God. Furthermore, the gods (in the form of planetary "influences") are, like Fortune, not real deities but forces through which God manifests his providence. Besides encouraging the comparison between pagan gods and the Christian God, the allusions to mythical characters, including Cupid, have another purpose in the poem: they also serve to indicate the progress of the tragedy.

There are numerous other mythological characters and gods that are mentioned in Troilus and Criseyde including Jove, Apollo, Mars, Venus, and Pallas Athena, among others. Many of these allusions effectively "set the stage" or provide convincing background to Chaucer's pagan story. McCall suggests another reason for the many mythical allusions in the poem. He claims that these allusions communicate Chaucer's tragic design by providing "a gradual, continuing contrast between past joy and present sorrow" (37). Indeed, these allusions often act as signposts, signaling the reader how far the tragedy has come, and what can be expected. Chaucer establishes a pattern of Troilus's first sorrow, his joy, and then his final sorrow. The narrator introduces this pattern at the beginning of the poem:

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,

> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie. (I. 1-4)

Some of the mythical characters that signify Troilus's first sorrow include Niobe, Tityus, Procne, and Amphiaraus (I. 699, 786, II. 64, 105). Many of these figures were deceived, and all of them experienced great pain. In this period of first sorrow, Mars is also referred to several times (2. 593-94, 988-89, 435). Allusions to Mars suggest, as McCall says, "impetuous, angry behavior, and even death" (23). In the middle, joyous, section of the poem, allusions are made to blissful Venus, Calliope, Hymen and all of the Muses (III. 1ff, 45, 1258, 1807-13). Troilus also mentions mythical characters who have experienced or been the object of overwhelming passion: Venus and Adonis, Jupiter and Europa, Mars and Venus, Apollo and Daphne, Mercury and Herse, and Athena and Aglawros (III. 715-730). Interestingly, many of these myths involve violence, death, or metamorphosis into a non-human form. Adonis was killed trying to elude Venus, Europa was abducted by Jupiter, Daphne became a laurel tree, and Aglawros was turned to stone. These stories thus foresee the final sorrow as much as they characterize the present joy. The final sorrow is primarily characterized by allusions to mythical figures representing death and hell. The narrator invokes the Furies and Mars at the beginning of Book IV (IV. 22-28). The characters also allude to Oedipus who died "in distresse"; Proserpina, the queen of the underworld; Myrrha, who was transformed into a tree; Minos, who judges the dead; Athamas, who dwells "Eternalich in Stix, the put of helle!"; Ixion, who is tortured eternally in hell; and the Manes, "which that goddes ben of peyne" (IV 300, 473, 1139, 1188, 1540, V. 212, 892). This final sorrow is certainly far more painful and destructive than the first sorrow of love described in the first two books. Several critics, including Bernard Huppé, describes this tragic pattern as a journey from hell into heaven, and then back into hell again. For Huppé, the second half of the poem is a mirror image of the first (184), although it must be noted that the descent into hell in the last two Books is certainly faster than the ascent into heaven in the first three Books. These mythical

allusions effectively alert the reader of the poem's tragic process. Ironically, even though the characters are incapable of becoming fully aware of and expressing their own forthcoming tragedy, they can unwittingly inform the reader of that tragedy through references such as these.

Chapter 3: Reading Divine Direction

The gods in Troilus and Criseyde often provide Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus with symbolic directions and messages in the form of dreams, the weather, and the position of heavenly bodies. As previously mentioned, these symbolic communications are riddled with interpretive problems. Not only do the characters not always agree on what these messages mean, but they also do not unanimously accept the fact that these phenomena contain significant information. Pandarus, for instance, persistently argues against Troilus's belief in the significance of dreams. Despite Pandarus's continual rejection of the meaningfulness of Troilus's dreams, however, it is apparent that the dreams in the poem, as well as the weather and astrological phenomena, are significant occurrences that Troilus, Pandarus, and Criseyde are meant to interpret. One reason that Pandarus's arguments can be rejected is that he argues against the significance of dreams in order to manipulate Troilus, not in order to discover the "truth." Pandarus's tendency to manipulate knowledge for his own ends is especially clear when one considers that Pandarus does not discount the significance of all symbolic communication; he considers such symbols significant if they promote his objective. Interestingly, Chaucer appears to agree with Pandarus's skepticism about dream interpretation on some level. In many of his poems, Chaucer represents dreams as ambiguous and difficult to categorize, even with the help of Macrobius's Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. However, although he does not believe that dreams are lucid and unambiguous, Chaucer suggests that the dreams and weather perceived by Pandarus, Troilus and Criseyde can and should be interpreted. For Chaucer, ambiguity does not necessitate meaninglessness; ambiguity merely makes interpretation more challenging. Indeed, as has been indicated, this poem is full of hermeneutic predicaments; the characters are continually challenged by difficult interpretive situations. As Meech explains, the highly semiotic environment of this poem makes it difficult for the reader to follow Pandarus's lead by disregarding these symbols:

"However attractive [Pandarus's] reasoning and however questionable the particular dreams which Troilus had, the reader has been too thoroughly conditioned to foreboding by Chaucer to side with his sceptical character" (105). Despite the obvious bias of Pandarus's cynicism about dream interpretation, and because Chaucer represents dreams as being difficult to understand, Pandarus's questions do warrant investigation. Thus, before studying the dreams, weather and astrological phenomena in Troilus and Criseyde, it is appropriate to address Pandarus's arguments about the insignificance of dreams in the context of medieval dream theory.

Pandarus's cynical speeches about the meaninglessness of dreams stem from his desire to preserve Troilus's confidence rather than his insight into the nature of dreams. Pandarus's opportunism is particularly apparent when the inconsistency of his position is evaluated. Fleming comments on Pandarus's inconsistency, observing that, even though Pandarus speaks against dream interpretation throughout the poem, he still attempts to interpret Troilus's boar dream in Book V. 1282-88 when it suits his purpose.

> Under the duress of Troilus' anxious vision, Pandarus, who has earlier expressed a Ciceronian contempt for the "science" of oneirocriticism, now becomes an interpres himself. His inconsistency is wholly consistent with his generally pragmatic and opportunistic behavior in the poem. His aim is to keep Troilus functional and, if possible, happy. His unscrupulous means–lies, misrepresentations, and the disingenuous manipulation of people and events–can be used against Troilus as well as against anyone else, so long as they are used to promote Pandarus's case. Hence we do not need to ask whether he believes his own optimistic interpretation of Troilus's dream. That interpretation is based not on a reading of the dream but upon a reading of Troilus. (219)

Regardless of his personal motives, Pandarus's position on the meaninglessness of dreams should not be entirely discounted, for even medieval dream theory held that some dreams were insignificant. In Chaucer's era, not all dreams were believed to be caused by divine inspiration. In fact, as Pandarus mentions, some dreams were thought to be provoked by diet and temperament: ". . . leches seyn that of complexiouns / Proceden

they, or fast, or glotonye. / Who woot in soth thus what thei signifie?" (V. 369-71). Joseph Gallagher employs the theories of Macrobius to describe such another kind of dream. Gallagher uses Criseyde's dream of the white eagle as an example, arguing that this dream could be an insomnium. In his Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, Macrobius says that nightmares, one kind of insomnium, are caused by "mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future" (88). Apparitions, the other kind of insomnium, are, according to Macrobius, the result of being

> between wakefulness and slumber, in the so-called "first cloud of sleep." In this drowsy condition he thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees specters rushing at him or wandering vaguely about, differing from natural creatures in size and shape, and hosts of diverse things, either delightful or disturbing. (89)

Macrobius argues that both nightmares and apparitions are "not worth interpreting since they have no prophetic significance" (88). These dreams are also not deserving of interpretation because of their transitory influence:

> Since these dreams and others like them arise from some condition or circumstance that irritates a man during the day and consequently disturbs him when he falls asleep, they flee when he awakes and vanish into thin air. Thus the name insomnium was given, not because such dreams occur "in sleep"–in this respect nightmares are like other types–but because they are noteworthy only during their course and afterwards have no significance or meaning. (89)

There are similarities between Troilus and Criseyde's dreams and insomnium. Troilus, for instance, dreams when he is anxious about the future of his relationship with Criseyde. According to the theories of Macrobius, Troilus's dreams could result from his apprehension and have no prophetic significance. On the other hand, Troilus's dreams appear to represent his future "correctly." Chaucer clearly has a complicated approach to the issue of meaning in dreams; the dreams in his poems can have many possible causes. In The House of Fame, Chaucer, through the narrator, discusses the difficulty of determining the cause and meaning of dreams:

> . . . hyt is wonder, be the roode,

> To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
> Eyther on morwes or on evenes,
> And why th'effect folweth of somme,
> And of somme hit shal never come;
> Why that is an avision
> And why this a revelacioun. (2 - 8)

By obscuring the possible significance of dreams, Chaucer acknowledges that the Macrobian categories are not perfectly and unambiguously identifiable. In fact, the only way to determine with certainty the type of dream is to wait and see if it comes true.

Keeping Chaucer's complicated approach to dreams in mind, it is still possible to establish that the dreams described in Troilus and Criseyde are different enough from insomnium to repudiate Pandarus's arguments. Gallagher points out, for instance, that Criseyde's dream of the white eagle is

> not simply an insomnium, for Macrobius insists that insomnia are not worth the trouble of interpretation because they have no value for prophecy (pp. 8-9); but Criseyde's dream forecasts quite accurately her possession by both Troilus and Diomede. (118, note)

Pandarus's concerns are invalid in the case of Troilus's dreams for the same reason; Troilus's dreams also accurately predict future occurrences. The significance of Troilus's boar dream, for instance, is verified when Cassandra explains its significance. Interestingly, even if these dreams were not proven to be true in the time of the poem, they still appear to be so to the reader. There are so many symbols and occasions for interpretation in this poem that events like dreams unavoidably seem to contain critical information symbolically. Thus, despite the fact that the source of these symbolic communications is uncertain, their function in the poem is clear: they provide the major characters with opportunities to interpret "correctly," and act responsibly as a result of their interpretation.

Because of the symbolic nature of the divine communications in the poem, dreams, weather and astrology are open to multiple interpretations. These symbols thus provide a significance hermeneutic challenge to the characters of Troilus and Criseyde. Through Calkas and Cassandra, however, Chaucer establishes that divine symbols such as dreams and astrological phenomenon can be interpreted–although it is important to note that these prophets may have been given a special gift from the gods. Thus, it is not surprising that the narrator, Pandarus, Troilus and Criseyde are not as consistently insightful in their interpretations as are these prophets. While the major characters in Troilus and Criseyde do have moments of "truthful" assessment, they tend to misread these signs to their own advantage. They also often fail to attempt interpretation of these signs at all.

Troilus and Criseyde both dream twice during the course of the poem. All four of these dreams present opportunities for the lovers to gain insight into their present situation as well as into their future. Although these dreams are not definitively linked to any one deity in particular, they all contain wisdom from an authoritative source, presumably the gods. Criseyde's dreams are the first two dreams that are described in the poem. She first dreams before her initial meeting with Pandarus. On this occasion, Criseyde tells Pandarus that "This nyght thrie, / To goode mot it turne, of yow I mette" (II. 89-90). Criseyde gives very few details about this dream; she merely says that she dreamt of Pandarus three times on the previous night. Although the ambiguity of this description ensures that analysis of this dream will leave many questions unanswered, some meaning can be garnered through investigation. On one level, the dream suggests Criseyde's close relationship with her uncle. She dreams of Pandarus because she is familiar with him. In terms of possible prophetic implications, this dream also suggests that Pandarus will be significantly involved in Criseyde's life in the near future–probably more so than in the past (hence the three occurrences of the same dream). It could also be argued that the dream is meant to warn Criseyde against her uncle's influence.

The number of occurrences of Criseyde's first dream can be seen to have significance. On one level, the three dreams correlate with the three parts of the story. Although the poem is split into five books, the story has essentially three sections, as previously discussed: Troilus's first sorrow, the central period of joy, and Troilus's final sorrow. Also, the number three is often associated with unity and wholeness in the Aristotelian poetic theory and in the Christian tradition, through the Trinity, for example. Thus, perhaps Criseyde's dreams also suggest the wholeness of the tragic design of Troilus and Criseyde. The number three can also be seen to indicate the three primary characters of the poem: Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus a portion of whose lives are the story of Troilus and Criseyde. Finally, the multiple occurrences of Criseyde's dream could also signify Pandarus's multiple faces. Pandarus often changes his attitude and aspect depending on what he can gain from the situation. He appears as the loving uncle, the chastising friend, and the sympathetic aide, among many others.

Even if the ambiguity of Criseyde's description of this dream makes an explicit interpretation difficult, it does not discourage the reader from attempting to interpret the dream. By not elaborating on the content of Criseyde's dream, Chaucer deepens the reader's sense of mystery and vague apprehension. The reader is drawn to ask "why Criseyde would have such dreams and what do they mean?" Even for a reader who is familiar with the story of Troilus and Criseyde, this dream has an ominous undertone that somehow points toward the story's tragic conclusion. Meech recognizes the ominous quality of this dream without being able to explain its meaning: "Criseyde welcomes her visitor with the flattering remark that she has dreamed of him thrice that night–a dream more portentous than she can realize" (36). The dream creates such suspense primarily because it appears to be a symbol. The dream does not tell a story, nor does it contain an obvious message for Criseyde; rather, this dream is cryptic, apparently containing hidden

information. The reader looks for the meaning contained in this symbol and is unable to determine it with any certainty. Thus, the reader is curious and looks forward to the time when the meaning of this dream will be revealed. Allen J. Frantzen argues that Chaucer satisfies the reader's curiosity through Criseyde's second dream, which, he says, reveals some of the meaning of her first dream.

Allen J. Frantzen argues that Criseyde's first dream, like Troilus's first dream, predicts a change in fortune which is elaborated upon in the second dream (108). Frantzen claims that Criseyde's first dream looks forward to an upturn in her life which is predicted more clearly in her second dream. Frantzen defends his argument by citing Criseyde's impression of her dreams. He accepts Criseyde's assumption of the positive nature of the dream, saying that "for Criseyde the dreams are without ominous overtones; they have foretold an upturn in her fortunes and have allayed her fear of commitment in love by suggesting that love is painless" (109). Frantzen places too much trust in Criseyde's ability to interpret her dreams "correctly." Although Criseyde interprets her dreams as having positive implications, this is not evidence, but merely her opinion, that the dream is entirely positive. Criseyde, like the other characters in the poem, desires to believe the best of her future and tends to interpret events to her advantage. Her interpretation of this dream could very well be an example of her wanting to believe the best–and wanting her uncle to think that she believes the best of him. We will now see that Criseyde's interpretation of her second dream makes her willful misreading of the first dream more clear.

The night after she dreams about Pandarus, Criseyde dreams again. Her second dream is also symbolic and predicts her relationship with Troilus:

> And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette
> How than an egle, fethered whit as bon,
> Under hire brest his longe clawes sette,

> And out hire herte he rente, and that anon,
> And dide his herte into hire brest to gon –
> Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte –
> And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte. (II. 925-31)

Priscilla Martin argues that this dream is subjectively, not objectively, positive for Criseyde. Martin claims that the dreams illustrates that Criseyde's "anxieties about sexual exploitation, aggression and loss of identity are beginning to be resolved at a subconscious level" (175). In his reading of this passage, Frantzen emphasizes the line "Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte," also claiming that the dream's meaning is positive.

> The dream is more than a "wish fulfillment." It offers an image of love persuasive in its power, beauty, and ease, and is therefore a temptation, one step closer to reality than a wish. Going to her bed, Criseyde was troubled, but when the eagle flies away and the narrator leaves Criseyde asleep, dark thoughts are far from her mind. (Frantzen 110)

While Martin's interpretation leaves room for the actual foreboding of these dreams, Frantzen's interpretation does not. Unlike Martin, Frantzen implies that Criseyde's dreams are actually, not just subjectively positive. As has already been mentioned, he argues that these dreams show that her future with Troilus is favorable, they foretell "an upturn in her fortunes." If the whole of the story is taken into account when considering this dream, Criseyde's ease appears to be an inaccurate impression, as it was with the first dream. Once again, the fact that Criseyde feels no pain and is not frightened is not proof of the dream's positive implication; the dream is definitely violent even if there is no pain. Wood displays his own cynicism with respect to Criseyde's interpretation when he calls the dream "ambiguous" and says that it could be thought of as "unsettling, if not worse" (Chaucer and the Country of the Stars 85).

There are, in fact, many negative aspects of her dream of the eagle that Criseyde does not take into account when she thinks well of her dream. The violence of the dream, for instance, must be noted. The kind of bird that appears in the dream is significant. It is not

a bird of love that appears to Criseyde, but a bird of prey, an eagle. The eagle suggests power and aggression rather than love and tenderness and is an appropriate symbol for Troilus, the warrior. Gallagher expands on the similarities between the eagle and Troilus the warrior: "The eagle is Troilus as aggressive and explicitly sexual lover, but it is also Troilus as warrior. In fact, it is the embodiment of the male as warrior. It is Troilus in battle as well as in love" (117). Gallagher goes on to discuss Troilus's characterization as warrior-lover:

> Virtually upon first introducing Troilus, the narrator establishes him as a warrior-lover. We are told that he was a "fierse and proude knyght" before he became "moost subgit unto love" (I.225-31). Even after his defeat by the arrows of the God of Love, he remains–as medieval lovers should remain–mighty in battle. There is, in fact, a doubleness to his character as warrior-lover which becomes one of the major elements in the poem long before the nightingale outside Criseyde's chamber is transformed into the eagle of her dream. On the one hand, Troilus is the epitome of aggressive and bloody masculinity in war; on the other, he is absolute prostrate humility in love. (118-19)

The eagle's act of love is as violent as the imagery that surrounds him. With his "longe clawes" the eagle "rente" Criseyde's heart from her chest and replaces it with his own. The eagle's expression of love resembles a physical attack. Joseph Gallagher summarizes the implications of the eagle's assault: "Its attack is in a very real sense the attack of war" (117). The warrior-eagle of Criseyde's dream does not only represent her first lover, Troilus, for Criseyde yields to another aggressive and powerful warrior in the course of the poem. This eagle could also represent Diomede, the other warrior-lover that steals Criseyde's heart.

Although the image of exchanging hearts is commonly used to represent love in medieval art, Chaucer's representation of the exchange of hearts departs from the convention in two ways. Gallagher explains that the

> conventional courtly situation . . . usually shows the beloved possessing the lover's heart without being entered in the process. [Also,] in contrast to

> Chaucer's presentation of such possession, the male is conventionally not an aggressor at all. As a matter of fact, he is usually under the woman's control and at her mercy. For example, when Chrestien's Yvain becomes so distressed at leaving his lady that his heart remains behind, the narrator is able to develop at length the idea that the physical absence of the lover's heart is the symbol of his misery at being separated from the woman to whom he is truly subservient. (116-17)

Chaucer departs from the conventional representation of an exchange of hearts to include violence in the act. It is not surprising that Chaucer would insert violence into this established convention for, as has already been mentioned, violence appears in many forms in this poem, including in the language used to describe love. Again, Chaucerian images of Venus come to mind. In Chaucer's poetry, Venus is responsible for nearly as much death and destruction as is Mars. In The Knight's Tale, the similarity between these two gods is clear; the paintings that decorate Venus's temple depict only slightly less violent scenes than those decorating Mars's temple. Criseyde's dream is also another way that Chaucer alludes to the violent backdrop of Troilus and Criseyde, the Trojan War. The violence of Criseyde's dream also alludes to the pain that is one component of her relationship with Troilus. Even before she becomes involved with Troilus, Criseyde is aware that anguish accompanies love:

> For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf,
> Right of hymself, that evere was bigonne;
> For evere som mystrust or nice strif
> Ther is in love, som cloude is over that sonne.
> Therto we wrecched wommen nothing konne,
> Whan us is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke;
> Oure wrecche is this, oure owen wo to drynke. (II. 778 - 84)

Criseyde's prediction is "correct"; both Troilus and Criseyde endure a "mooste stormy lyf" because of their love. Indeed, suffering is one of the distinguishing characteristics of their relationship. First, Troilus suffers as a result of initially loving Criseyde. Then, they both struggle through the process of entering the relationship. Finally, their separation causes them both great anguish–Troilus's anguish continuing until his death. For Troilus, only death can end the suffering that he feels because of Criseyde's betrayal.

While Criseyde's two dreams anticipate the inception of her relationship with Troilus, Troilus's two dreams anticipate the destruction of their relationship and the subsequent destruction of Troilus. Frantzen comments on the parallel structure and function of the two sets of dreams:

> Criseyde's first dream corresponds to the first dream of Troilus, in which he glimpses his fall (V, 249-52). The second in each of the two pairs of dreams–her dream of the eagle (II, 925-31) and his puzzling dream about her and the boar (V, 1240-46)–both expand the earlier dreams and expand upon their actions and images. So specific are these correspondences that the dreams are not merely "part of the structure of a poem," as Hieatt has said, but a frame for the love story. (105)

While, as previously mentioned, Frantzen overstates the positivity of Criseyde's dreams, he is certainly "correct" about Troilus's dreams which predict the end of his relationship with Criseyde, as well as his own death.

In his first dream, Troilus's life is once again characterized through bird imagery. The white eagle of Criseyde's dream has become the hooting owl of Troilus's dream. The once triumphant Troilus is now a doomed man. The narrator describes Troilus's dreams of death:

> And whan he fil in any slomberynges,
> Anon bygynne he sholde for to grone
> And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges
> That myghte ben; as mete he were allone
> In place horrible makyng ay his mone,
> Or meten that he was amonges alle
> His enemys, and in hire hondes falle. (V. 246-52)

Troilus also tells Pandarus that his dreams have convinced him that he "mot nedes dye" (318). This belief is founded partly in the appearance of an owl in his dream; he tells Pandarus that "The owle ek, which that hette Escaphilo, / Hath after me shright al thise nyghtes two" (319-20). According to Greek myth, Ascalaphus was turned into an owl by Proserpine, the queen of the Underworld. The owl has associations with death apart from

the story of Ascalaphus, however. The owl, as Chaucer says in his Legend of Good Women, "prophete is of wo and of myschaunce" (2254). Also, in The Parliament of Fowls, Chaucer says that the owl "of deth the bode bryngeth" (343). Troilus's sense of dire foreboding is not melodramatic or exaggerated. Troilus does soon die, despite Pandarus's arguments against the significance of dreams, "A straw for alle swevenes signifiaunce!" (V. 362). Interestingly, the images that lead Troilus to predict his own death have nothing to do with his actual after-life experience.

When Troilus ascends to the spheres after his death, he is not alone in a terrible place, nor is he surrounded by his enemies. Also, none of the traditional figures of Greek myth make their appearance after Troilus dies. In fact, Troilus's experience of the after-life is entirely positive. He gains knowledge and perspective on the pains of his life. The narrator tells us of Troilus's happy fate after death:

> And whan he was slayn in this manere,
> His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
> Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere,
> In convers letyng everich element;
> And ther he saugh with ful avysement
> The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye
> With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie. (1807-13)

Troilus's ascent through the spheres is, as noted by Wood, "a basic metaphor for the ascent to wisdom" (Chaucer and the Country of the Stars 88). Ironically, this ascent resembles Scipio's description of the reward of "those who have saved, aided, or enlarged the commonwealth" (71). In his dream, Scipio is told that just rulers "have a definite place marked off in the heavens where they may enjoy a blessed existence forever" (71). Thus, while Troilus's interpretation of his death dreams is accurate, it not the only possible interpretation. As well as predicting Troilus's death, the death dream also predicts the death of pain and violence for Troilus. Macrobius provides one explanation of the discrepancy between the characteristics of death as represented in Troilus's dream

and the characteristics of his actual death. He says that nightmares can be caused by mental anxiety: "the patient experiences in dreams vexations similar to those that disturb him during the day" (88). Thus, because Troilus's life is full of violence and pain, his vision of death is similarly violent and painful. Ironically, through Troilus's dream of death, the reader gains insight into the extent to which Troilus's life is filled with violence. Troilus's second dream resembles the first dream in that it also expresses the violence of his life. His second dream, however, also explains the circumstances that lead him to his death.

Not only does Troilus's second dream predict Troilus's death, as did the first dream, but it also encourages the realization of this prediction. The narrator describes this second dream:

> So on a day he leyde hym doun to slepe,
> And so byfel that yn his slep hym thoughte
> That in a forest faste he welk to wepe
> For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte;
> And up and doun as he the forest soughte,
> He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete,
> That slepte ayeyn the bryghte sonnes hete.
>
> And by this bor, faste in his armes folde,
> Lay, kyssyng ay, his lady bryghte, Criseyde.
> For sorwe of which, whan he it gan byholde,
> And for despit, out of his slep he breyde. (1233-43)

Although this dream has subtleties that are only illuminated by Cassandra's explanation, the basic meaning of this dream is clear for the reader, who has witnessed the development of Criseyde's relationship with Diomede. Criseyde is no longer pursuing her relationship with Troilus because she has found another man to protect her and take care of her. Surprisingly, in this moment when he has the greatest reason not to see the "truth," Troilus interprets this dream "correctly." He tells Pandarus that "My lady bryght, Criseyde, hath me bytrayed" (1247). He also continues to "correctly" predict his own

death: "I n'am but ded; ther nys noon other bote" (1245-46). On one level, as Frantzen points out, Troilus continues to foresee his own death after his second dream because he "equates loss of Criseyde with death" (111). However, since Troilus had already made this prediction before he dreams of Criseyde's betrayal, Frantzen's comment does not entirely account for Troilus's prophecy. Troilus appears to have gained interpretive insight which allows him to "correctly" interpret both of his dreams.

Although Troilus asserts the validity of the prophecy of death contained in his dreams, he does not accept his fate without some resistance. After Cassandra confirms his suspicions about Criseyde's faithlessness, Troilus responds angrily, rejecting her prophecy. For the first time since falling in love, Troilus is active, and energetically pursues the "truth":

> Cassandre goth, and he with cruel herte
> Foryat his wo, for angre of hire speche;
> And from his bed al sodeynly he sterte,
> As though al hool hym hadde ymad a leche.
> And day by day he gan enquere and seche
> A sooth of this with al his fulle cure;
> And thus he drieth forth his aventure. (1534-40)

Unfortunately, apart from this comment made by the narrator, Troilus's new drive for the "truth" is not evident in the rest of the poem. Indeed, only forty lines later he falls back into the old habit of excusing Criseyde's absence. He persists in believing, contrary to the evidence, that Criseyde has not come because she is delayed by her father: "And in his herte he wente hire excusynge, / That Calkas caused al hire tariynge" (1574-75). Troilus certainly cannot be saved by such a compromised motivation. Of course, Troilus's survival is not an option at this point in the story; the narrator leads the reader to believe that Troilus will die rather than survive. In the stanza following the narrator's description of Troilus's new-found activity and pursuit of the "truth," Troilus's final downfall is described metaphorically, through a description of Troy's downfall:

> Fortune, which that permutacioun
> Of thynges hath, as it is hire comitted

> Thorugh purveyaunce and disposicioun
> Of heighte Jove, as regnes shal be flitted
> Fro folk in folk, or when they shal be smytted,
> Gan pulle awey the fetheres brighte of Troie
> Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie. (1541-47)

This stanza describes "little Troy," Troilus, as well as it does the city of Troy. The bird imagery that surrounds Troilus again surfaces in this description when the narrator describes how Fortune "Gan pulle awey the fetheres bright" of Troy. These "fetheres" could also belong to the once-triumphant white eagle of Criseyde's dream.

Dreams are thus one way in which the characters of Troilus and Criseyde are warned of their forthcoming destruction. Dreams are not the only symbolic vehicle used by the gods to indicate how the characters's lives will develop, however. Meteorological and astrological phenomena also give Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus clues to their destiny which Pandarus, in keeping with his character, interprets to his advantage. Pandarus, of course, offers much resistance to Troilus's belief in the portentous nature of his dreams. Pandarus does not argue against the significance of dreams out of a general suspicion of symbolic divine communication, however. Rather, as has been discussed, Pandarus discounts Troilus's dreams because they influence Troilus contrary to Pandarus's wishes. Presumably, if Troilus had positive dreams about his relationship with Criseyde, Pandarus would endorse their interpretation. Several times in the course of the poem, Pandarus interprets and takes other kinds of symbolic communications seriously such as the weather and the position of the stars. Pandarus's interpretation of astrological and meteorological events reveals much about his approach to signs and his views on the purpose of assessing signs. Pandarus appears to consider the interpretation of these natural phenomena as empty signs which can be filled with whatever meaning will help him in his manipulation of Troilus and Criseyde. These signs become convenient endorsement for Pandarus's ambitions, for Pandarus never sees a negative message in these symbolic communications. Pandarus's interpretations also provide an interesting

introduction to Chaucer's use of astrology and meteorology in Troilus and Criseyde. Pandarus is not the only character who displays an interest in these kinds of symbols. As will be discussed, weather and astrology are also significant for other characters in the poem, particularly Troilus.

Pandarus first displays his interest in the position of the heavenly bodies in Book II. The morning after discovering Troilus's love-sickness, Pandarus decides to visit Criseyde since he ". . . knew in good plit was the moone / To doon viage . . . " (74-75). The narrator does not provide us with any other information on the position of the moon, so it is not clear whether or not Pandarus is "correct" in his interpretation. However, an interesting pattern in Pandarus's interpretive habits is revealed in this brief passage that is repeated in subsequent passages in the poem. Pandarus considers symbolic events like astrological positionings as business information. He consistently sees them as an excuse to pursue his business ventures. The reader gets the impression that no matter where the moon was, Pandarus would see it as a good omen.

Pandarus's willful interpretation of the weather and positioning of the heavenly bodies is most clear in Book III when he arranges a rendezvous for Troilus and Criseyde. The night of the rendezvous is rainy and is accompanied by an ominous conjunction of planets:

> The bente moone with hire hornes pale,
> Saturne, and Jove, in Cancro joyned were,
> That swych a reyn from heven gan avale
> That every maner womman that was there
> Hadde of that smoky reyn a verray feere. (III. 624-28)

Pandarus is aware that this storm is approaching before he proceeds with his plans. As part of his description of how Pandarus went about his business, the narrator mentions the bad weather conditions:

> Now is ther litel more for to doone,
> But Pandare up and, shortly for to seyne,

> Right sone upon the chaungynge of the moone,
> Whan lightles is the world a nyght or tweyne,
> And that the wolken shop hym for to reyne,
> He streght o morwe unto his nece wente–
> Ye han wel herd the fyn of his entente. (547-53)

North observes that this conjunction is traditionally associated with occasions of "social or religious upheaval" including, among others, Noah's Flood (North 371). Pandarus sees this conjunction of planets, which typically (as well as specifically, in this case) "leads to consequences of tragic magnitude," and thinks that it is a good night for the lovers to meet (Meech 67). From Pandarus's point of view, the dark night is beneficial for secrecy and as an excuse to keep Criseyde at his house for the night: "Pandarus, securely measuring the world by the human scale, sees only the convenience of the rain, arriving as he had forecast, to provide a plausible excuse for Criseyde to stay overnight" (Mann 92). In this instance, Pandarus obviously misreads the symbolic information–or misperceives the significance of the information. He may, indeed, understand the symbolic meaning of the planetary conjunction, but he fails to use the information properly.

Many critics agree that this conjunction actually occurred during Chaucer's lifetime and was, as Meech describes, most likely an ominous event for Chaucer and his audience;

> The conjunction . . . . must have been impressive to the audience of Chaucer's day. Saturn and Jupiter were to be conjoined in 1385 for the first time since 769, with extraordinary consequences anticipated and, after the event, presumed. (67)

This astrological event would have been extraordinary for Chaucer and others alive at the time partly because it represents the great forces of fate in motion.

> The conceptualization of the Universe is majestic and humbling, an ordered monarchy, with Fortune, as Dante conceived her, a minister of God and, as was the received opinion, the planets also his agents, all carrying out His will in ways inscrutable to men. (67)

In the context of this magnificent event, and the approaching tragedy, Pandarus's pandering seems a selfish, ridiculous and irresponsible endeavor. As Wood says, "The conjuring up of one of the 'great conjunctions' for such a paltry business reminds us of the true perspective we should have . . . with regard to Pandarus's shallow scheming" (Chaucer and the Country of the Stars 49). Chaucer's use of the conjunction provides the reader with a perspective on Pandarus and his manipulation of signs and human beings.

Chaucer also uses astrology to provide insight into Troilus's character. In Book II, the narrator provides the reader of Troilus and Criseyde with some information about the astrological circumstances of Troilus's birth. This astrological information, which Wood calls a "horoscope of sorts" (76), helps both to characterize Troilus and confirm the influence that the stars have over human beings:

> And also blisful Venus, wel arrayed,
> Sat in hire seventhe hous of hevene tho,
> Disposed wel, and with aspectes payed,
> To helpe sely Troilus of his woo.
> And soth to seyne, she nas not al a foo
> To Troilus in his nativitee. (680-85)

Wood claims that not only does this passage indicate that "Troilus is one of the 'children' of Venus," but that this association with Venus strengthens the image of Troilus as a personification of the city of Troy which is "like a body brought low by lechery" (77). For Troilus, in particular, this passage confirms that Venus is well disposed to help Troilus, or, as the narrator says, Venus is "not al a foo" to Troilus.

The information that the narrator provides about the astrological conditions of Troilus's birth also disproves an assertion made by Troilus in Book III. On the night of the consummation, Troilus prays to Venus, suggesting that he was subject to evil planetary influences at the time of his birth and asking her to counteract these influences:

> And if ich hadde, O Venus ful of myrthe,

> Aspectes badde of Mars or of Saturne,
> Or thow combust or let were in my birthe,
> Thy fader prey al thilke harm disturne
> Or grace, and that I glad ayein may turne. (715-19)

The reader knows, because of the comments made by the narrator in Book II, that Venus was fairly disposed to Troilus at the time of his birth. Any difficulties that he is having at the moment are not due to negative astrological influences. They may, instead, be blamed on Troilus's poor choices or lack of forethought.

Conclusion

We have seen in this thesis how the major characters of Troilus and Criseyde read their world. This poem also reveals much about how Chaucer reads his world, including his awareness of the complexity and constant compromise of human life. In Chaucer's poems, human beings are compromised by themselves and each other; they must negotiate their own feelings and desires while also responding to the desires of others. Thus, individuals must struggle to understand each other and act responsibly as a result of that understanding. Unfortunately, in Chaucer's world, many individuals fail to understand other people because they pursue their goals selfishly and at the expense of others. As a result, reading rarely occurs without misinterpretation, and truth is rarely acknowledged and accepted. The most disturbing aspect of this destructive behavior is the fact that much of it is unwitting. People often cause each other harm not because they intend to, but because they misperceive, misjudge or misinterpret signs.

Misinterpretation is certainly a momentous issue for Chaucer. As we have seen, Chaucer shows us numerous instances of misinterpretation in Troilus and Criseyde that lead to emotionally, physically and socially destructive consequences. Although he indicates that misinterpretation is common and difficult to evade, Chaucer does not claim that misinterpretation is always inevitable. The characters of Troilus and Criseyde, for instance, are not compelled to misunderstand each other; many of their misinterpretations could be avoided. Chaucer suggests that there are ways to improve the odds of communicating successfully. Unfortunately, the best available solution to the problems surrounding communication is as uncertain as these problems are ambiguous. In Chaucer's poetry, one of the most significant things that any individual can do to improve the chances of successful communication is to try sincerely to understand and acknowledge any relevant information that surfaces. Chaucer also suggests the

importance of being aware of the problems inherent in communication, for if an individual is aware that communication can be difficult, he/she may try harder to communicate successfully. Chaucer encourages his audience's awareness of some of these problems through the narrator of Troilus and Criseyde. We have seen that the narrator remarks on the contingency of linguistic meaning on time and personal experience. Finally, Chaucer also suggests that having a constructive attitude toward communication and interpretation is also an important step towards successful communication. This positive attitude is, of course, what Judith Ferster calls "good will." It is clear in Troilus and Criseyde that one's attitude can have a powerful hermeneutic influence. Troilus's passive attitude, for instance, greatly influences his interpretive tendencies and inhibits his interpretive abilities. Criseyde's defensive, cautious attitude also causes her to miscommunicate and to misunderstand and mislead others. Troilus and Criseyde not only impede their communicative abilities by having a manipulative attitude toward communication, however; they also fail to evaluate their own behavior.

One hermeneutic lesson that can be learned from Troilus and Criseyde is that one of the most important steps toward effective communication, and one of the most important kinds of interpretation is self-interpretation. Because of the subjectivity inherent in this kind of interpretation, it can be difficult to do. However, self-evaluation is essential if one is to communicate effectively with others, for without self-knowledge one cannot know one's own biases and desires–the very things that color interpretation. One reason that the characters of Troilus and Criseyde constantly misinterpret signs is that they seldom stop to evaluate their motivations and consider whether they are assessing their situations correctly.[1] When Troilus reads Criseyde's first letter, he does not consider that his desires

---

[1]Of course, this is not to say that Chaucer's characters are capable of self-knowledge as are characters from modern literature. This poem obviously predates the modern notion of "self"--although, later constructions of Chaucer and of his characters were instrumental in articulating this notion. However, Chaucer clearly depicts his characters as being capable of contemplation on many personal points. The reader witnesses, for example, Criseyde's interior monologues in Book II. Similarly, as previously mentioned, Troilus wonders at

may affect his interpretation. He merely assumes that the letter means what he wants it to. Similarly, Pandarus never considers why he is so intent on encouraging Troilus's relationship with Criseyde. He also never wonders if his choices could have negative consequences. Interestingly, this poem which is full of self-ignorance is also a tribute to self-knowledge, for in a sense, this poem is Chaucer's own self-evaluation. In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer studies his own motivations as a poet as well as the power of language, and the consequences of reading and interpretation.

If Troilus and Criseyde shows us how the characters and the poet struggle with hermeneutic issues, as well as the interpretive mistakes of the characters, could it also show us the poet's interpretive mistakes? For instance, we have seen that Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus impose their will on what they read. Could Chaucer be said to be doing the same thing with the story of Troilus and Criseyde? Is Chaucer reading this story as he wants to, populating it with characters who struggle with poetic issues that focus on interpretation and meaning? Indeed, Chaucer has made one of the greatest tragedies of the story a hermeneutic dilemma. In this poem, Chaucer shows us that individuals are ultimately alone because of their inability to communicate with others authentically. Thus, even when Troilus and Criseyde's relationship seems certain and unmistakable, it is instantly redefined when Criseyde rereads the situation. There are certain similarities between Troilus, Pandarus and Criseyde's misreading and Chaucer's use of their story to explore semiotic and hermeneutic issues. Chaucer, like the characters, places meaning within a text. Chaucer, however, does not place meaning within the story of Troilus and Criseyde in order to avoid seeing the story's "true" meaning. Rather, he offers another interpretation of the story's meaning. His version of Troilus and Criseyde is not meant to be a straightforward translation of a previous version, nor is it his representation of what

---

his passive attitude in Book V. Thus, Chaucer indicates that his characters are capable of some degree of personal reflection--they just choose not to pursue it.

another poet intended; previous versions of the story merely provide him with the raw material for his story. Unlike Chaucer, however, Troilus does not read Criseyde's letter as being positive in order to explore another interpretation of her meaning; he merely wants to find in it that she will love him.

Although Chaucer takes some poetic license with the story of Troilus and Criseyde, he does not suggest that poets have interpretive autonomy. Chaucer holds that poets should attempt to understand literature sincerely, even though they may also go on to compose an alternate version of what they have read. "Correct" interpretation is a responsiblity common to all people. Because we are constantly exposed to signs and symbols including language, literature, human behavior and natural phenomena and because signs are both ubiquitous and powerful, "correct" interpretation is not a responsibility easily or justly evaded. Thus, it is important for readers, as well as poets, to be aware of how they respond to signs and symbols. Ironically, one way that readers can achieve this self-knowledge is through reading stories; stories provide a valuable opportunity for readers to see themselves in the actions of a character and evaluate their own hermeneutic tendencies.

Works Cited

Arthur, Ross G. Medieval Sign Theory and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1987.

Barney, Stephen A. "Troilus Bound." Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: "Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism. Ed. R.A. Shoaf. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992. 1 - 16.

Benson, C. David. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.

Benson, C. David. "The Opaque Text of Chaucer's Criseyde." Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: "Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism. Ed. R.A. Shoaf. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992. 17 - 28.

Berryman, Charles. "The Ironic Design of Fortune in Troilus and Criseyde." Chaucer Review. 2(1967): 1 - 7.

Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy. Trans. V.E. Watts. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.

Brewer, D.S. Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. "The House of Fame." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 348 - 373.

—. "The Knight's Tale." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 37 - 66.

—. "The Legend of Good Women." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 588 - 630.

—. "The Monk's Tale." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 241 - 252.

—. "The Parliament of Fowls." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 385 - 394.

—. "The Retraction." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 1083 - 84.

—. "Troilus and Criseyde." The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1987. 473 - 585.

Colish, Marcia L. The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge. London: Yale University Press, 1968.

Derrida, Jacques. "Des Tours de Babel." Difference in Translation. Ed. by Joseph F. Graham. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. 165 - 205.

Diamond, Arlyn. "Troilus and Criseyde: The Politics of Love." Chaucer in the Eighties. Ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Robert J. Blanch. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986. 93 - 103.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. "Reading Like a Man: The Critics, the Narrator, Troilus, and Pandarus." Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, "Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism. Ed. R. A. Shoaf. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992. 47 - 73.

Dodd, William George. Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913.

Donaldson, E. Talbot. Speaking of Chaucer. London: Athlone Press, 1970.

Dunning, T. P. "God and man in Troilus and Criseyde." English and Medieval Studies Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday. Ed. Norman Davis and C.L. Wrenn. London: Allen & Unwin, 1962. 164 - 82.

Eco, Umberto. The Limits of Interpretation. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Ferster, Judith. Chaucer on Interpretation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Fleming, John V. Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977. 113 - 138.

Frantzen, Allen J. "The 'Joie and Tene' of Dreams in Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer in the Eighties. Ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Robert J. Blanch. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986. 105 - 119.

Gallagher, Joseph E. "Criseyde's Dream of the Eagle: Love and War in Troilus and Criseyde." MLQ. 36(1975): 115 - 32.

Gordon, Ida L. The Double Sorrow of Troilus: A Study of Ambiguities in Troilus and Criseyde. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. The Romance of the Rose. Trans. by Harry W. Robbins. Ed. Charles W. Dunn. New York: Meridian. 1962.

Holub, Robert C. Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction. London: Methuen, 1984.

Huppé, Bernard F. "The Unlikely Narrator: The Narrative Strategy of the Troilus." Signs and Symbols in Chaucer's Poetry. Ed. John P. Hermann and John J. Burke, Jr. University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1981. 179 - 194.

Kellogg, Laura D. Boccaccio's and Chaucer's Cressida. New York: Peter Lang, 1995. Vol. 16 of Studies in the Humanities: Literature – Politics – Society. Gen. ed. Guy R. Mermier.

Kaminsky, Alice R. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and the Critics. New York: Oberlin, 1980.

Knapp, Peggy. Chaucer and the Social Contest. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Lewis, C. S. The Allegory of Love. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Macrobius. Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Trans. William Harris Stahl. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

Mann, Jill. "The Planetary Gods in Chaucer and Henryson." Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer. Ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 91 - 106.

Martin, Priscilla. Chaucer's Women: Nuns, Wives and Amazons. London: Macmillan, 1990.

McAlpine, Monica E. The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

McCall, John P. Chaucer Among the Gods: The Poetics of Classical Myth. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979.

Minnis, A. J. Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982.

Meech, Sanford B. Design in Chaucer's Troilus. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959.

Mizener, Arthur. "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde." Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Stephen A. Barney. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1980. 55 - 74.

Mudrick, Marvin. "Chaucer's Nightingales." Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism. Ed. Stephen A. Barney. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1980. 91 - 99.

North, J.D. Chaucer's Universe. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988.

Peirce, Charles. "On the Nature of Signs." Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce. Ed. James Hoopes. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991. 141 - 143.

Prado, C.G. Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995.

Pulsiano, Phillip. "Redeemed Language and the Ending of Troilus and Criseyde." Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature. Ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989. 153 - 174.

Ridley, Florence. "Chaucer and Hermeneutics." Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture. Ed. Patrick J. Gallacher and Helen Damico. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989. 15 - 25.

Robertson, D.W, Jr. Extract on "Medieval doctrines of love." Critical Essays on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems. Ed. C. David Benson. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991. 68 - 91.

Root, R.K., and Henry N. Russell. "A Planetary Date for Chaucer's Troilus." PMLA. 39(1924): 48-63.

Rowe, Donald W. O Love, O Charite!: Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer's Troilus. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.

De Saussure, Ferdinand. Course in General Linguistics. Ed. Charles Bally and Alberta Sechehaye. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.

Shoaf, R. A. Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry. Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983.

Smith, Paul. Discerning the Subject. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Spearing, A. C. The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Steadman, John M. Disembodied Laughter: Troilus and the Apotheosis Tradition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Strohm, Paul. Social Chaucer. Preface. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Sturges, Robert S. "Textual Scholarship: Ideologies of Literary Production." Exemplaria 3(1991): 109 - 131.

Vance, Eugene. Mervelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986.

Wasserman, Julian N. "Both Fixed and Free: Language and Destiny in Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde." Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature. Ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989. 194 - 222.

Wetherbee, Winthrop. Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on *Troilus and Criseyde*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Williams, Raymond. "Ideology." Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. London: Croom Helm, 1976. 126 - 130.

Wood, Chauncey. Chaucer and the Country of the Stars: Poetic Uses of Astrological Imagery. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Wood, Chauncey. The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus. Preface. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984. ix - xii.